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For Immediate Release

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Bonita Springs Attains Green Government Certification *FGBC Designation Confirms Environmental Stewardship*

(Tallahassee, FL) – The Florida Green Building Coalition (FGBC), a membership-based non-profit organization that administers certification standards and provides education to promote sustainable building, development and business practices, has designated the city of Bonita Springs a certified Florida Green Local Government after it successfully met the sustainability standards established in the FGBC Green Local Government Certification program. Bonita Springs achieved 53.4 percent of the 253 applicable points, earning it a gold-level designation.

Suzanne Cook, FGBC Executive Director, said the designation demonstrates exemplary leadership by Bonita Springs elected officials who provided the framework and support to move forward with the process that helps to better manage the cost of government.

“Their leadership in this effort will help protect and conserve the community’s natural resources, enhance the efficiency of government thus reducing the cost to taxpayers, and raise public awareness about the benefits of environmental stewardship. Our membership applauds the municipality’s dedication and commitment to the important ideals outlined in this program,” said Cook.

In order to achieve the FGBC Green Local Government Certification, Bonita Springs staff, led by planner and sustainability coordinator Jennifer Hagen with the Community Development Department, undertook an extensive audit of the functions performed by every department within the government. The criteria included evaluations of energy and water usage, air quality, health issues, land use, recycling and waste disposal, maintenance policies, educational programs, purchasing practices, regulatory policies, and many others.

From there teams used FGBC’s program tools to identify methods to improve the sustainability of their business practices and operations.

Cook noted that there were significant and tangible accomplishments that will benefit taxpayers and the environment.

“Through these efforts, there were reductions in operating costs and capital outlays, improvements in departmental communication, cooperation, and risk and asset management, a wealth of environmental benefits including measureable CO₂ reductions, and identification of programs that will improve community involvement and enhance sustainability throughout Bonita Springs,” Cook explained.

“This program is an opportunity for local governments to establish sustainable practices that can be carried out on a systematic basis, and sets in motion a process that will extend beyond election terms and protect the community for years to come,” Cook remarked.

FGBC’s Green Local Government Certification program is the only one of its type in Florida and is endorsed by the Florida Legislature, the Florida League of Cities and the Florida League of Mayors. Cook emphasized that this level of support emanates from the fact that there is a sizeable and compelling return on investment for any local government that chooses to initiate the process.

“Depending upon the population of the community, the cost of this program is between \$2,000 and \$6,000. “The cost savings and environmental benefits that can be achieved dwarf the initial expenditure, Cook concluded.”

Some of Bonita Springs’ green achievements include:

- Environmental commitment included in the city’s mission statement and comprehensive plan
- Provides website information dedicated to the city’s sustainability program
- Monitors and tracks local government energy and water use
- Provides the air quality index and water quality testing on the city’s website
- Adopted a green standard as the official minimum criteria for new and renovated government buildings, including a green landscaping ordinance
- Certified government landscapes to the Florida Friendly Landscape program and applies best management practices at public parks and amenities
- Trains and certifies select staff as certified arborists
- Minimizes heat island effect and stormwater runoff of recreational areas with the use of trees, highly reflective materials, or pervious surface
- Implemented energy-efficient lighting & controls for outdoor recreational parks

- Utilizes solar or other energy efficient streetlights
- Implemented the Florida Dept of Transportation's "12 Steps Towards Walkable Communities" into planning process
- Adopt as policy "healthy street design" to minimize stormwater runoff and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by encouraging walkability
- Implemented advanced stormwater controls and waterfront considerations to reduce hazardous waste discharge into natural water bodies
- Developed an Environmentally Preferred Purchasing Program for the local government
- Employs green cleaning and maintenance policies
- Participates in the Cities for Climate Protection Campaign aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions
- Created an endangered lands conservation / purchasing program
- Developed & implements plans for invasive species removal throughout public lands
- Offers incentives for FGBC or LEED green building certification of residential, commercial, institutional, and land development projects
- Affordable housing constructed by the city and other parties is mandated green
- Provides incentives for construction of green affordable housing
- Conducts a green building awards program and publicizes green building case studies
- Enacted and enforces a tree preservation or land-clearing ordinance
- Enacted a septic system replacement ordinance
- Enacted a sea turtle ordinance and manatee protection plan
- Developed a boat facility siting plan for preservation of key habitat and protection of endangered species
- Enacted and enforces a Florida Friendly Landscaping ordinance for new construction
- Enacted fountain or water feature standards to ensure that best management practices are used for water conservation
- Minimizes chlorine in community swimming pools
- Provides green building education and materials to the community and operates an environmental demonstration center
- Offers free or discounted green products to the public
- Maintains an active student / teacher education program
- Involves students in green projects within and outside the school

- Offers education on organic farming, permaculture, and sustainable agriculture
- Has teamed with tourism department on eco-tourism campaign and tracks the amount of tourism that takes place in eco-related activities
- Developed an historic preservation ordinance and funding mechanism to aid with historic preservation and because of those efforts achieved Florida Main Street Designation
- Provides reusable mug / water bottle to all employees
- New employee orientation includes general city commitment to the environment
- Enacted local government policy so all computers and related equipment is turned off when not in use
- Enacted a policy so all computer electronic equipment purchased has conservation features
- Recycles end-of-life electronic equipment
- Implemented recycling stations for plastic, glass and aluminum containers at all recreational areas
- Enact mandatory recycling of typical household recyclables and construction & demolition waste
- Provides public transportation route information, alternative commuting options, and carpooling information on the city's website
- Developed a construction project waste management and recycling plan
- Maintains a departmental green fleet program for city vehicles
- Utilizes integrated pest management
- Requires recycling at all local government buildings
- Adopted policies to encourage alternative onsite wastewater and water reuse technologies
- Adopted Appendix C of the Building Code to allow for gray water recycling systems

Presentation of the award to Bonita Springs officials will be held on at 5:30 p.m. on April 6, 2016 during the Bonita Springs City Council meeting in City Hall.

Since the FGBC Green Local Government Certification program was launched, 85 Florida local governments have registered to participate in the program, with 60 certified to date. The program is performance based, not prescriptive, and all of the certified governments have found that many of their existing programs and policies contributed to the point total needed for certification.

The Florida Green Building Coalition is an independent non-profit organization that was established in 2000 to promote green building in Florida. FGBC's membership is comprised of individuals and businesses from all areas of the building industry, including research, design, materials, products, construction, inspection, marketing, finance, and sales. For more information about the FGBC Green Local Governments designation visit www.floridagreenbuilding.org.

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