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## **Charlotte County Attains Green Government Certification** *FGBC Designation Confirms Environmental Stewardship*

Tallahassee, FL – The Florida Green Building Coalition (FGBC), a membership-based non-profit organization that promotes sustainable building, development and business practices, has designated Charlotte County a certified Florida Green Local Government after it successfully met the sustainability standards established in the FGBC Green Local Government Certification program. Charlotte County achieved 26 percent, earning it a silver-level designation.

Suzanne Cook, FGBC Executive Director, said the designation demonstrates a strong commitment by Charlotte County elected officials to embrace the tenants of sustainability, while also helping to better manage the cost of government. “Their leadership in this effort will help protect and conserve our natural resources, enhance the efficiency of government, and raise public awareness about the benefits of environmental stewardship,” Cook said. “Our membership applauds the County’s dedication and commitment to the important ideals outlined in this program.”

In order to achieve the FGBC Green Local Government Certification, Charlotte County staff, led by Julia Galofre, Building Code and Sustainability Specialist, undertook an extensive audit of the functions performed by every department within its government. The criteria included evaluations of energy and water usage, air quality, health issues, land use, waste disposal and recycling, maintenance policies, educational programs, purchasing practices, regulatory policies, and many others. From there teams used FGBC’s online program tools to identify methods to improve the sustainability of their business practices and operations.

Cook said 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 CO<sub>2</sub> reductions, and identification of programs that will improve community involvement and enhance sustainability throughout Charlotte County,” Cook noted.

FGBC’s Green Local Government Certification program is the only one of its type in Florida and it 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 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,” she said. “The cost savings and environmental benefits that can be achieved dwarf the initial expenditure.”

In the case of Charlotte County, Cook listed just a few of the significant accomplishments that were achieved:

- Development of local government energy and water reduction plans
- Enacted a rain sensor ordinance for irrigation systems
- Adopted green standards as the minimum criteria for new government buildings
- Established a dedicated staff person or office to coordinate future sustainability efforts
- Enacted a green landscaping ordinance for government buildings and achieve Florida Friendly Landscape certification within the county
- Created a reclaimed water infrastructure and conduct an energy audit of treatment facilities
- Provide green building and water conservation education to government staff, industry professionals and the community through the County’s website and other outreach efforts.
- Offer incentives for green certified land development projects and buildings, and provide rebates for low-flow water fixtures
- Include green features or ratings in homes database
- Enact a landscaping ordinance for new construction
- Conduct a green building awards program
- Partner with the economic development department to promote eco-tourism
- Adopt green fleet maintenance practices
- Create an endangered lands conservation/purchasing program

- Enact coastal areas sea turtle ordinance
- Minimize chlorine in community swimming pools
- Participate in the Florida Clean Marina program
- Implement advanced stormwater controls and waterfront considerations
- Analyze transportation routes to determine connectivity to bicycle & pedestrian networks
- Operate a local government material/chemical reuse/redistribution center and a public reuse store / swap shop
- Become a partner in the EPA waste wise program
- Offer waste assessments to businesses and develop a disaster waste management plan
- Offer recycled paint back to community
- Initiate landfill gas recovery

Since the FGBC Green Local Government Certification program was launched, a total of 54 local governments have registered to participate in the program. Currently, 29 Florida local governments have achieved certification, with 25 others registered and in the process of certification. 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. “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 said.

Presentation of the award to Charlotte County officials will be held on Tuesday, June 28, 2011 at 9 a.m. during the Commission meeting in the Commission Chambers located at 18500 Murdock Circle in Port Charlotte.

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](http://www.floridagreenbuilding.org).

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