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## **Coconut Creek 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 Coconut Creek a certified Florida Green Local Government after it successfully met the sustainability standards established in the FGBC Green Local Government Certification program. Coconut Creek achieved 53 percent of its 355 applicable points, earning it a gold-level designation, the highest score of all FGBC certified local governments within Broward County and the fifth highest scoring local government in the state.

Suzanne Cook, FGBC Executive Director, said the designation demonstrates exemplary leadership by Coconut Creek’s Mayor Tooley and other 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,” Cook said. “Our membership applauds the municipality’s dedication and commitment to the important ideals outlined in this program.”

In order to achieve the FGBC Green Local Government Certification, Coconut Creek staff, led by Senior Planner Linda Whitman, undertook an extensive audit of the functions performed by every department within their 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 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 and cooperation reducing duplication and conflict of efforts, improved risk and asset management, a wealth of environmental benefits such as measureable CO<sub>2</sub> reductions, and identification of programs that will improve community involvement and enhance sustainability throughout Coconut Creek,” Cook noted.

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 municipality 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 Coconut Creek, Cook listed a some of the significant accomplishments:

- Establishment of the City [Green Plan](#) and a method for annual monitoring
- Develop a system of sustainable community indicators
- Develop energy reduction plan and monitor and track energy use
- Develop a water use reduction plan
- Develop an Environmentally Preferred Purchasing (EPP) program
- Participate in the Cities for Climate Protection Campaign
- Purchase alternative fuel vehicles
- Construct or renovate buildings to a green certification standard, such as FGBC or LEED. *(In 2013 (latest report available), green building in the community increased from 19% to 26% of total construction.)*
- Employ green cleaning and maintenance procedures
- Maintain an office, person or group to coordinate ongoing green activities
- Adopt FGBC or LEED green standards as official green standards for the city
- Offer incentives for FGBC or LEED certified commercial and institutional buildings
- Organize green building education for local government staff and the community
- Offer free or discounted green products to the public
- Offer incentives to create organic farms or sustainable and water efficient agriculture

- Offer education on organic farming, permaculture, and sustainable agriculture
- Maintain an electronic database of all green certified buildings and energy ratings
- Enact and enforce a tree preservation or land-clearing ordinance
- Create an eco-tourism campaign and track amount of tourism related to eco-activities
- Achieve Florida Main Street designation
- Provide incentives for location of green businesses to the city
- Offer special promotion for local eco-hotels
- Develop an historic preservation ordinance and funding mechanism
- Use alternative fuel vehicles or bicycles for patrol of urban and neighborhood areas
- Firing ranges utilize non-lead bullets or trap and collect fragments
- Police trained in crime prevention through environmental design
- Offer incentives to reduce energy use in commercial and residential buildings
- Affordable housing projects constructed by city and other parties mandated green
- Offer incentives for construction of green affordable housing
- Alternative commuting incentives provided to city employees
- New employee orientation includes city commitment to the environment
- Operate a local government computer & equipment reuse center and recycle end-of-life electronic equipment
- Enact policy so all government computer equipment is turned off when not in use
- Operate a website dedicated to city's green program and include environmental education content
- Become an Audubon Sustainable Community
- Create an Endangered lands conservation or purchasing program
- Certify the community under the National Wildlife Federation Wildlife Habitat program
- Provide water and air quality index on city's website
- Maintain organic community gardens
- Implement recycling stations for plastic, glass and aluminum containers in all public areas
- Implement the FDOT "12 Steps Towards Walkable Communities" into city planning process
- Develop and maintain urban area boundaries
- Encourage mixed-use zoning & development

- Include residential green features in the Property Appraiser database
- Accommodate bicycles in traffic lanes
- Provide public transportation route searching and alternative commuting on the city's website
- Develop a construction project waste management and recycling plan
- Operate a community tool lending library
- Maintain a green fleet program
- Utilize integrated pest management
- Operate a local government alternative fueling station
- Use LED traffic lights
- Employ green landscaping procedures for city facilities
- Become a Tree City USA
- Develop a reward program for employee environmental innovation in public works
- Implement a community stormwater education campaign
- School grounds certified and maintained by environmental program
- Involve students in green projects
- Offer city-wide chemical and hazardous waste collection
- Offer recycling collection and education program to businesses and multi-family dwellings
- Offer low-flow plumbing fixture rebates to reduce community water use
- Enforce water restrictions during meter reads
- Create an education campaign for water use reduction, such as Florida Friendly Landscaping, rainwater harvesting, etc.
- Maintain an on-call water quality program
- Innovative credits that included:
  - creating a Tree Canopy Replacement program and National Wildlife resident education and reimbursement program;
  - Implementation of underground utilities;
  - Solar PV or green technology permitting discounts

Since the FGBC Green Local Government Certification program was launched, 74 local governments have registered to participate in the program, with 52 of those currently certified. 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.

*The Florida Green Building Coalition is a 501(C)3 non-profit organization that was established in 2000 to promote green building in Florida. FGBC’s membership is open to anyone and is comprised of individuals and businesses from all areas of the building industry, including research, design, products, construction, inspection, marketing, finance, and sales. The FGBC is the leading certifier of green projects in Florida. Five “Florida Green” certification standards exist: Homes, Commercial, Residential High-Rise Building, Land Development, and Local Government. For more information about the FGBC Green Local Governments designation visit [www.floridagreenbuilding.org](http://www.floridagreenbuilding.org).*

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