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For Immediate Release

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Largo 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 Largo a certified Florida Green Local Government after it successfully met the sustainability standards established in the FGBC Green Local Government Certification program. Largo achieved 24 percent of the 291 applicable points, earning them a silver-level designation.

Suzanne Cook, FGBC Executive Director, said the designation demonstrates exemplary leadership by Mayor Patricia Gerard 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 city’s dedication and commitment to the important ideals outlined in this program.”

In order to achieve the FGBC Green Local Government Certification, Largo staff, led by Charles “Chas” Jordan, Management Analyst II - Public Works & Fire Rescue, 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, 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 the city of Largo,” Cook noted.

FGBC’s Green Local Government Certification program is the only one of its type in the country 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 the city of Largo, Cook listed some of the significant accomplishments that were achieved:

- Monitor and track local government energy and water use, as well as its solid waste generation and recycling rates
- Maintain an office, person or group to coordinate current and future green activities
- Organize green building education and materials for local government staff
- Purchase alternative fuel vehicles and maintain a green fleet program
- Operate website dedicated to the green city program and develop environmental education content
- Provide pertinent local GIS and other data on city website, including air quality index
- Implement a community stormwater education campaign
- Offer free or discounted green products to the public
- Provide incentives for location of green businesses within the city
- Develop an historic preservation ordinance
- Use renewable energy as backup / emergency power
- Police trained in crime prevention through environmental design
- Provide reusable mugs and water bottles to employees
- Recycle end-of-life electronic equipment
- Enact policy requiring all electronic equipment purchased to have conservation features
- Enact policy requiring all computers and ancillary equipment be turned off when not in use
- Enact open burning regulations

- Maintain organic community gardens
- Become a Tree City USA
- Install appropriate bicycle security at all public amenities
- Provide recycling stations for plastic, glass and aluminum at all public areas
- Provide city-wide chemical and hazardous waste collection
- Offer recycling collection services and education to businesses and multifamily dwellings
- Offer waste assessments to businesses
- Offer mulched yard waste to community
- Monitor types and amounts of material entering landfill
- Develop a disaster waste management plan
- Encourage mixed-use zoning and development
- School grounds certified by environmental program
- Teach environmental purchasing practices (EPP) and recycling to local businesses
- Develop education program for solid waste management
- Offer education materials to increase recycling program participation
- Create a reclaimed water infrastructure
- Implement a sanitary sewer overflow abatement program to protect groundwater
- Distribute printed material or website content detailing water/wastewater treatment, quality and emissions information

Since the FGBC Green Local Government Certification program was launched, 35 Florida local governments have achieved certification, with 20 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 the city of Largo officials will be held on February 7, 2012, at 6 p.m. during the Commission meeting in the Largo City Hall, 201 Highland Ave N., Largo, Fla.

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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