

Date: December 21, 2011

For Immediate Release

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North Port 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 North Port a certified Florida Green Local Government after it successfully met the sustainability standards established in the FGBC Green Local Government Certification program. North Port achieved 41 percent of the 295 applicable points, earning them a Gold-level designation.

Suzanne Cook, FGBC Executive Director, said the designation demonstrates exemplary leadership by Commission Chair Tom Jones 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, North Port staff, led by Stan Frank, Grants and Environmental Coordinator for the Neighborhood Development Services – Planning Division, 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 North Port,” 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 North Port, Cook listed just a few of the significant accomplishments that were achieved:

- Incorporate the sustainability mission statement into the City’s comprehensive plan.
- Adopt the Florida Green Building Coalition green building standard as official minimum criteria for new government buildings
- Offer incentives for location of green businesses within city
- Offer Low flow fixture rebates
- Create an education campaign for water use reduction (xeriscaping, rainwater harvesting, etc.)
- Enforce watering restrictions during meter reads
- Encourage mixed-use zoning / development
- Monitor and track local government solid waste generation/ recycling rates.
- Create a reclaimed water infrastructure
- Develop an Environmentally Preferred Purchasing Program (EPP) for the local government
- Maintain an office, person, or group to coordinate current and future green activities.
- Conduct energy audit of treatment facilities
- Employ green cleaning and maintenance procedures.
- Participate in Cities for Climate Protection Campaign.

- Become a Tree City USA
- Become a partner in the EPA waste wise program
- Organize green building education for local government staff.
- Earn certified Florida friendly landscapes within the city/county.
- Employ green landscaping procedures for local government facilities
- Train and certify select staff as certified arborists
- Offer free or discounted green products to the public.
- Require mitigation for consumption of natural habitat or resources.
- Enact and enforce a tree preservation or land-clearing ordinance.
- Enact a septic system replacement ordinance.
- Enact a landscaping ordinance for new construction.
- Conduct a green building awards program.
- Team with tourism department on eco-tourism campaign.
- Use alternative fuel vehicles (AFV) and/or bicycle patrol for urban/neighborhood areas.
- Minimize photo-processing waste.
- Fire departments review training operations and conserve water where appropriate.
- Police trained in crime prevention through environmental design.
- Public safety staff attend training on Healthy Street design.
- Offer energy audits.
- Offer residential building incentives.
- Recycle end-of-life electronic equipment
- Enact local government policy so all computer/ancillary equipment is off when not in use
- Develop environmental education content for the City's websites, TV programs, etc.
- Create an endangered lands conservation / purchasing program
- Enact open burning regulations
- Enact a manatee protection plan
- Enact car wash standards
- Provide the City's air quality index and water quality testing reports on the website
- Maintain organic community gardens
- Implement recycling stations for plastic, glass, and aluminum containers at all areas
- Implement energy efficient lighting & controls for outdoor courts, parks, and playfields
- Place signs and/or brochures describing green features of public amenities

- Engage in carpool/vanpool assistance
- Analyze transportation routes to determine connectivity to bicycle & pedestrian network
- Provide information about alternative commuting on website
- Utilize integrated pest management
- Use LED traffic lights and solar or other energy-efficient streetlights
- Involve students in green projects outside the school
- Provide curbside recycling and city-wide chemical/hazardous waste collection
- Mandatory recycling of typical recyclables and C&D debris for homes and businesses
- Develop a disaster waste management plan
- Offer mulched yard waste to community
- Teach Environmentally Preferred Purchasing and recycling practices to local businesses
- Use recycled bill envelopes and utilize informative billing for sustainability education to community residents
- Maintain an on-call water quality program

Since the FGBC Green Local Government Certification program was launched, 34 Florida municipalities 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 North Port officials is tentatively scheduled for January 9, 2012 during the City Commission meeting.

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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