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For Immediate Release

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Palm Beach 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 administers certification standards and provides education to promote sustainable building, development and business practices, has designated Palm Beach County a certified Florida Green Local Government after it successfully met the sustainability standards established in the FGBC Green Local Government Certification program. Palm Beach achieved 42 percent of the 404 applicable points, earning it a silver-level designation.

Suzanne Cook, FGBC Executive Director, said the designation demonstrates exemplary leadership by the Palm Beach County Board of County Commissioners, chaired by Shelley Vana, 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 county’s dedication and commitment to the important ideals outlined in this program.”

In order to achieve the FGBC Green Local Government Certification, Palm Beach County staff, led by Bonnie Finneran, Director of Environmental Resources Management, and Environmental Analyst Rowan Hughes, 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 county,” 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 Palm Beach County, Cook listed just a few of the significant accomplishments that were achieved:

- Palm Beach County utilizes an extensive fleet of hybrid vehicles, including hybrid buses for public transit and over 50 percent of its cars and utility vehicles. In addition, the county practices green fleet management to reduce the environmental impact of its vehicles.
- Construction projects integrate the reuse of materials such as crushed concrete from demolition projects as the base for sidewalks or other new projects.
- Palm Beach County has a creative approach to both purchasing and managing surplus that benefits the community, including operating a thrift and reuse store that is open to the public.
- The County and the School Board have done an excellent job communicating, coordinating and pursuing environmental goals within the school system. Efforts include recycling, involving teachers and students in green projects, and tracking building energy use in real time, which cultivates an awareness of conservation in the next generation of leaders.
- The county demonstrates a clear commitment to environmental excellence through the use of biodiesel, maintaining Audubon certified golf courses, creating organic community gardens, and utilizing solar energy photovoltaic applications.
- The use of tree canopies and pervious surface help minimize heat island effects at public parks and mixed-use zoning developments.

Since the FGBC Green Local Government Certification program was launched, 41 Florida municipalities have achieved certification, with 17 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 Palm Beach County officials will be held on Tuesday, October 2, 2012 at 9:30 a.m., during the County Commission meeting in the Government Center, 301 North Olive Avenue, 6th Floor, West Palm Beach, 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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Complete List of Green Achievements

- Monitor and track local government energy use
- Participate in Cities for Climate Protection Campaign
- Purchase alternative fuel vehicles
- Construct or renovate local government buildings to FGBC or LEED green certification standards
- Maintain an office, person, or group to coordinate local government green activities
- Enact green landscaping ordinance for local government buildings
- Utilize renewable energy or energy-efficient local government buildings
- Budget for publicity and education related to the government’s commitment to green
- Organize green building education for local government staff

- Achieve Florida Friendly Landscaping Program certification for public properties within the local government and maintain a Florida Yards & Neighborhood or other landscaping outreach program to homeowners, builders and developers.
- Offer free or discounted green products to the public
- Offer incentives to create organic farms or sustainable, water-efficient agriculture
- Provide green building education to government staff, industry professionals and community residents
- Offer promotion and education on water conservation, organic farming, permaculture, and sustainable agriculture within the agricultural sector
- Offer incentives for FGBC or LEED certified commercial and institutional buildings
- Require mitigation for consumption of natural habitat or resources
- Enact and enforce a tree preservation or land-clearing ordinance
- Team with tourism department on eco-tourism campaign and track amount of tourism that takes part in eco-related activities
- Provide incentives to green businesses to locate within the county and offer special promotion for local eco-hotels
- Develop an historic preservation ordinance and funding mechanism to aid with historic preservation
- Use alternative fuel vehicles (AFV) or bicycle patrol for urban and neighborhood areas
- Maintain green fleets
- Fire department review training operations and conserve water where appropriate
- Provide alternative commuting incentives for local government employees
- Operate local government computer and equipment reuse center and recycle end-of-life electronic equipment
- Operate website dedicated to county's green program and provide environmental education content and TV programs
- Conduct regular education on energy use/energy savings modes for in-house equipment
- Create an endangered lands conservation/purchasing program
- Develop and implement plans for species removal throughout public lands
- Become a member of the Florida Local Environmental Resource Agencies (FLERA)
- Reduce emissions through retrofit of diesel vehicles
- Enact open burning regulations, sea turtle ordinance, and manatee protection plan

- Develop a boat facility siting plan
- Provide pertinent local GIS data, water quality testing, and air quality index on county website
- Operate an environmental demonstration/learning center
- Maintain organic community gardens
- Minimize chlorine in community swimming pools
- Install appropriate bicycle security at all public amenities
- Public golf courses are Audubon certified
- Minimize heat island effect and stormwater runoff of trees through use of reflective and pervious materials
- Public beaches adhere to Blue Wave Campaign criteria
- Implement recycling stations for plastic, glass and aluminum in all areas
- Install energy-efficient lighting and controls for outdoor courts, parks, and playfields
- Place educational signs or brochures at public amenities regarding the green features and benefits
- Develop a system of sustainable community indicators related to county planning and assist departments with tracking of indicators related to their function
- Maintain a bicycle/pedestrian coordinator on staff
- Healthy street design is official local government policy
- Develop and maintain urban area boundaries
- Encourage mixed-use zoning and development
- Organize green building seminars and training sessions for staff and elected officials
- Provide tax incentives for lands qualifying as historic, high water recharge, greenbelt, etc.
- Utilize alternative fuels for fleet
- Make amends for vehicles to accommodate bicycles
- Engage in carpool/vanpool assistance and implement carpool/express bus lanes
- Analyze transportation routes and improve connectivity to bicycle and pedestrian network
- Provide public transportation route searching and alternative commuting information via the internet
- Develop a construction project waste management/recycling plan
- Maintain a green fleet program
- Use LED traffic lights and utilize solar or other energy-efficient streetlights and crosswalk lights
- Monitor and track building energy usage in the school district
- Maintain a recycling program

- School grounds certified by an environmental program
- School system utilizes a pollution prevention or EPP program
- Provide a school equipment reuse program and swap shop
- Implement mandates for green buildings and green cleaning for school
- Involve students in green projects within and outside the school
- Provide incentives to teachers for environmental training over the summer
- Provide county-wide chemical and hazardous waste collection
- Operate a landfill gas recovery system
- Develop a disaster waste management plan
- Offer recycling education and services to businesses and multi-family buildings
- Monitor types and amounts of material entering landfill and incorporate closed landfill management
- Provide volume-based or special rates for solid waste collection
- Develop education program on recycling and solid waste management for businesses
- Offer mulch and yard waste to the community
- Create a reclaimed water infrastructure and provide sanitary sewer overflow abatement
- Offer water and energy audits to homeowners and businesses