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## **St. Pete Beach 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 St. Pete Beach a certified Florida Green Local Government after it successfully met the sustainability standards established in the FGBC Green Local Government Certification program. St. Pete Beach achieved 21 percent of the 300 applicable points, earning them a silver-level designation.

Suzanne Cook, FGBC Executive Director, said the designation demonstrates exemplary leadership by Mayor Steve McFarlin 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, St. Pete Beach staff, led by Catherine Hartley, Senior Planner for the Community Development Department, 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 CO<sub>2</sub> reductions, and identification of programs that will improve community involvement and enhance sustainability throughout the city,” 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 St. Pete Beach, Cook listed just a few of the significant accomplishments that were achieved:

- Created a sustainability mission statement and incorporated it into the comprehensive plan
- Monitor and track local government energy and water use
- Developed an Environmentally Preferred Purchasing (EPP) plan
- Employ green cleaning and maintenance procedures
- Maintain an office, person or group to coordinate green activities
- Adopted a green standard as the official minimum criteria for new government buildings
- Enacted a green landscaping ordinance for local government buildings and new construction
- Apply Florida-Friendly landscaping principles at public amenities
- Enacted a septic tank replacement ordinance
- Developed an historic preservation ordinance
- Use alternative fuel vehicles or bicycle patrol for urban neighborhood areas
- Use non-lead bullets in firing ranges and trap or collect fragments
- Offer energy audits to the community
- Provide reusable mugs and water bottles to employees

- Adopted policy for energy conservation related to office equipment and recycle end-of-life electronic equipment
- Enacted open burning regulations
- Enacted sea turtle ordinance and manatee protection plan
- Provide sustainability information on the City's website, including air and water quality indexes, and public transportation routes/schedules.
- Encourage mixed-use zoning
- Utilize integrated pest management
- Become a Tree City USA
- Developed a reward program for employee environmental innovation in public works
- Provide city-wide chemical and hazardous waste collection
- Require recycling at all local government buildings

Since the FGBC Green Local Government Certification program was launched, 33 Florida municipalities have achieved certification, with 21 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 St. Pete Beach officials will be held on October 11, 2011 at 6 p.m. during the City Commission meeting in the Commission Chambers located at 155 Corey Avenue, St. Pete Beach.

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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