

SARASOTA COUNTY GREEN BUSINESS PARTNERSHIP EXPANSION

Presented by Global Urban Development
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Sarasota County Green Business Partnership has provided green business certification to 128 Sarasota County businesses. It is one of the leading Green Business Certification Programs in the United States and has been replicated in other counties, yet it operates with one half-time staff person.

With additional resources and a more aggressive marketing strategy, the Green Business Partnership could expand to include a much larger percentage of the 14,000 businesses in Sarasota County. Also, a comprehensive post-certification program could be implemented, including:

- Formation of a Green Business Network.
- Promotion of additional business—both business to consumer (B-C) and business to business (B-B)—for certified Green Businesses.
- Provision of advanced assistance to save additional money and resources.
- Establishment of a business assistance program for Green Businesses.

To accomplish these goals, Global Urban Development (GUD) is making nine specific recommendations:

1. Increase the staffing of the Green Business Partnership, with staff promoting the program and encouraging post-certification activities when they are not doing certifications.
2. Formulate a target for the number of businesses certified per year and aggressively promote the Green Business Partnership to reach that target.
3. Enhance the on-line dimension of Green Business Certification.
4. Identify and implement metrics and a system of measurement for resources and dollars saved and pollution prevented through Green Business Certification.
5. Promote the Sarasota County Green Map and other ways to encourage consumers to patronize Certified Green Businesses.

6. Constitute a post-certification program for Green Businesses – in the form of a Green Business Network – perhaps in association with the recently formed Sarasota Chamber of Commerce Green Council.
7. Encourage Green B-B (business to business) transactions through the Green Business Network, government purchasing programs, and other means.
8. Establish an advanced program to save additional money and resources, perhaps in association with Natural Capitalism.
9. Implement a program for encouraging initiation, expansion, attraction, and retention of Green Businesses in Sarasota County.

A significant expansion of the Green Business Partnership could be accomplished at modest cost by making the position of Coordinator full time and by adding two additional staff. The Coordinator of the Green Business Partnership projects that this expansion could produce at least 20 certifications per month – 240 per year. Any downtime in relation to certification could be used to promote the Green Business Partnership and to build the Green Business Network and other post-certification activities.

Through expansion of the Green Business Partnership, Sarasota County will be in a position to maintain and publicize its position as the county with the largest number of Certified Green Businesses, per capita, in the nation.

An expanded and strengthened Green Business Partnership would make a significant contribution to building a Sustainable Economy in Sarasota County by:

- Saving a much larger amount of money and resources.
- Preventing pollution on a much more significant scale.
- Stimulating the Sarasota County market for the products and services of local Clean Tech Businesses.
- Assisting in diversifying the Sarasota County economy without adversely impacting the Sarasota County environment and quality of life.

PART ONE: CONTEXT

The Green Business Partnership, coordinated by Sarasota County, encourages environmental stewardship and recognizes businesses that make an extra effort to operate in an environmentally responsible manner by providing them with Green Business Certification.

Organization: The Green Business Partnership was initiated through a grant awarded by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection to Sarasota County. The Green Business Partnership now has 128 local members.

There is no cost to businesses for participation in the Green Business Partnership and it is open to all businesses in Sarasota County, regardless of type or size, that implement environmental standards documented through an on-site certification assessment. Certification is valid for three years, after which a recertification process is required.

To become a certified Green Business Partner, companies:

- Make a commitment to the program by agreeing to display the program seal and adopting the following Green Business Pledge: “[Name of business] believes that a successful business is dependent upon a healthy environment. We pledge to demonstrate our environmental stewardship by reducing waste and conserving natural resources, and by operating an environmentally responsible business.”
- Implement the required environmental standards, as indicated on the application and checklist.
- Participate in an on-site visit to verify that the business meets the required standards.

Measures: The Sarasota County Green Business Partnership uses a standard set of measures to evaluate the environmental performance of businesses. Green business certification is awarded based on the accomplishment of standards as appropriate depending on the type of business.

The standards can be summarized as follows:

Category	Standards
General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Designate a responsible group. ▪ Communicate environmental commitment. ▪ Post Green Business Pledge and decal.
Solid Waste	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Complete an assessment. ▪ Establish a recycling and/or composting program. ▪ Implement paper and other waste reduction programs ▪ Undertake a reuse program. ▪ Establish a purchasing program for recycled, reconditioned, or reused alternatives.
Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Implement a facility water conservation program. ▪ Undertake a lawn maintenance and landscaping program.
Energy Conservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Have a professional energy assessment performed. ▪ Perform regular heating, ventilation, and air conditioning maintenance. ▪ Implement an energy efficiency program, including use of Energy Star appliances, an Energy Management System, fuel efficient and alternative fuel vehicles, and alternative sources of energy. ▪ Address efficiency in lighting, and heating and cooling of air and water. ▪ Undertake an energy conservation program.

As an aspect of the Green Business Partnership, Sarasota County provides a free waste assessment and Florida Power & Light offers free energy

assessments and rebates for certain types of high-efficiency cooling systems, energy-efficient ventilation units, and installation.

Certification by the Green Business Partnership is promoted through a Listing in the Green Business Partnership Directory and on the GreenMap website as well as through advertisements and news releases in the local media.

Savings: The Green Business Partnership is demonstrating that the practice of sound environmental stewardship produces significant cost savings.

According to the Green Business Partnership website, examples include:

- Akuwa Solutions Group completing two server virtualization projects reducing the number of physical servers from 14 to four.
- Carlson Studio Architecture saving more than \$1,600/year by implementing energy and water conservation measures and reducing waste.
- Children's World Uniform Supply reducing paper consumption 50 percent by practicing double-sided copying and using scrap paper for draft copy printing and notepads.
- Doctors Hospital's "Linen Conservation Initiative" saving more than 51,000 kWh of electricity and more than 10,000 gallons of water, resulting in savings to the hospital of \$56,000.
- The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art undertaking a facilities improvement project to reduce electricity, natural gas and water consumption, resulting in more than \$100,000 in annual savings.
- Mirasol FAFCO Solar cutting garbage costs 50 percent by increasing recycling and decreasing garbage services.
- Sarasota Coastal Credit Union eliminating plastic utensils and Styrofoam cups; participating in a toner cartridge recycling program; switching nearly half of the 26,000 members to electronic statements, saving 3.12 tons of paper, 53 trees, 1,186 gallons of oil, 12,480 kWh of electricity, and 21,840 gallons of water.
- Venice Golf and Country Club reducing nitrogen and other contaminants released into the Myakka River watershed by more than 4,000 pounds per year, by irrigating the property with captured stormwater, and also removing invasive trees and plants and replanting 13 wetland preserves with native plants.

Impact: Sarasota County, with its 128 certified Green Businesses, may already be the county with the highest percentage of Certified Green Businesses per capita of any county in the nation.

The San Francisco Bay Area Green Business Program is generally considered to be the leading Green Business Certification Program in the U.S. The two counties with the most certified Green Businesses in the Bay Area are Alameda County (population – 1,474,368) with 290 certified Green Businesses and Contra Costa County (population – 1,029,703) with 300 certified Green Businesses. Therefore, Sarasota County has 41% of the certified Green Businesses that Contra Costa County has, with only 35% of the population.

Green Business Certification is growing rapidly. It is significant that the State of California has now moved to organize a statewide program, evolving some common tools and metrics. California has Green Business Certification Programs in 13 different counties throughout the State.

The Green Business Partnership is well respected and has been replicated elsewhere. The Green Business Partnership is very cost effective for Sarasota County, in that all aspects of the program are operated by one Sarasota County Solid Waste staff person, working half time as Coordinator of the Green Business Partnership.

However, the program is not widely known outside of Sarasota County and Florida and, according to the Green Business Partnership Coordinator, the program has not been adding new businesses over the last few months.

Meetings with Participants: In addition to meeting with the Green Business Partnership Coordinator, the Global Urban Development (GUD) team met with a dozen participating businesses. The representatives of the participating businesses were uniformly enthusiastic about the Green Business Partnership and all reported significant benefits from participating, particularly in terms of identification of opportunities for cost savings.

However, the businesses noted that there is no post-certification program and offered a number of suggestions for strengthening the program, including:

- Formulation of a set of metrics and a system for measuring resource and cost savings.
- Constitution of a post-certification Green Business Network.
- Establishment of an advanced program for businesses that want to go beyond the offerings of the Green Business Partnership and incorporate more extensive and intensive green practices in their businesses.

PART TWO: CONCEPT

Green Businesses are exactly the type of businesses that Sarasota County wants to encourage, as part of a diversified Sustainable Economic Development Strategy, because they contribute economic activity, jobs, and tax revenues without significant adverse impacts to the County's natural environment.

As discussed in the GUD paper, *Green Economy Classification System: Industries, Markets, Jobs & Strategies for Sarasota County*, it is useful to make a distinction between businesses that are "producers" of products or services that improve environmental performance (Clean Tech Businesses) and "users" of such technologies and services (Green Businesses).

Clean Tech Businesses develop, create, and sell environmental products and services – i.e. products and services that are resource efficient and benefit the environment. Green Businesses seek to embody resource efficient, environmentally beneficial business practices in the way they carry out their operations – often using Clean Tech products and services. (Optimally, Clean Tech Businesses are also Green Businesses.) Thus, in addition to their other benefits, Green Businesses provide an important market for the products and services of Clean Tech Businesses.

Based on the experience of the Green Business Partnership to date and the experience of other Green Business Certification Programs, a significant expansion of the Green Business Partnership will yield substantial cost savings for businesses who receive certification and tangible environmental benefits for Sarasota County.

A significant expansion of the Green Business Partnership can also make an important contribution to the Sarasota County Brand locally and nationally. Expansion of the Green Business Partnership can also become a factor in initiation, expansion, attraction, and retention of Green Businesses in Sarasota County.

The GUD team is recommending that Sarasota County build on the excellent foundation that has already been established with the Green Business Partnership and expand and upgrade the program by:

- Establishing an aggressive marketing and outreach effort to businesses within Sarasota County to encourage them to save money and resources by joining the Green Business Partnership and become certified.

- Adding additional staff, on-line and in-person infrastructure, and a system of metrics and measurement.
- Undertaking a comprehensive post-certification program, including networking, promotion of business-to-consumer (B-C) and business-to-business (B-B) transactions, and the opportunity for implementing advanced Green Business measures and strategies.
- Featuring the Green Business Partnership and Sarasota County as the county with the most Green Businesses per capita of any county in the country in Sarasota County's Branding and Communications Initiative.
- Focusing on Green Businesses as one aspect of a Sarasota County Business Development Network.

PART THREE: SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: *Increase the staffing of the Green Business Partnership, with staff promoting the program and encouraging post-certification activities when they are not doing certifications*

According to the Green Business Partnership Coordinator, each Green Business Certification involves approximately five hours of training per business and two- to-three hours of certification per business, for a total of seven to eight hours per certified business.

A significant expansion of the Green Business Partnership could be accomplished at relatively modest cost by making the position of Coordinator full time, by adding two additional staff, and by incorporating the Green Business Partnership as a significant aspect of the overall Sarasota County Branding and Communications Initiative.

The Coordinator of the Green Business Partnership projects that this expansion could produce at least 20 certifications per month – 240 per year. Any downtime in relation to certification could be used to promote the Green Business Partnership and to build the Green Business Network and other post-certification activities.

Recommendation 2: *Formulate a target for the number of businesses certified per year and aggressively promote the Green Business Partnership to reach that target*

Sarasota County has 14,000 businesses. If the Green Business Partnership averaged 240 certifications a year, in five years 1,200 businesses could have been certified – over 8.5% of the total businesses in Sarasota County.

Operating at this level would make the Sarasota County Green Business Partnership the largest and the fastest growing Green Business Certification Program in the nation, with all of the attendant cost savings, environmental benefits, and branding and communications impacts.

Recommendation 3: *Expand the on-line dimension of Green Business Certification*

The Bay Area Green Business Program is moving a large portion of the certification process on-line, which will enable a more rapid and effective

certification process. This is clearly the direction that Green Business Certification Programs will be going in the future, so it makes sense for the Sarasota County Green Business Partnership to proceed in this direction as well.

The Bay Area Green Business Program views spreading and strengthening Green Business Programs nationally as an aspect of its mission, so it is prepared to provide low/no-cost consultation to assist the Sarasota County Green Business Partnership in developing an enhanced on-line version of Green Business Certification.

Recommendation 4: Identify and implement metrics and a system of measurement for resources and dollars saved and pollution prevented through Green Business Certification

Identifying and implementing metrics and a system of measurement for the Green Business Partnership will be very helpful to the member businesses, so that they can clearly track what they are saving in dollars and resources and the pollution they are preventing. It will also be helpful in communicating the total dollars and resources saved and the pollution prevented by all of the members of the Green Business Partnership taken together.

California, led by San Francisco County, is moving to establish common metrics for resources saved and pollution prevented for all of the county Green Business Programs in California. Information on this effort can be obtained at www.greenbusinessca.org. As discussed in Recommendation 3, the Bay Area Green Business Program and the San Francisco Green Business Program are prepared to be helpful in sharing information on and jointly evolving metrics and a system of measurement.

Recommendation 5: Promote the Sarasota County Green Map and other ways to encourage consumers to patronize Certified Green Businesses

Sarasota County maintains a Directory of all of the members of the Green Business Partnership on its website and also includes the members of the Green Business Partnership as one overlay for the on-line Sarasota County Green Map. These are both excellent resources, however, according to the County staff members interviewed by the GUD team, these two sites get very little traffic.

It will be very useful to include promotion of the Green Map and the Directory of all of the members of the Green Business Partnership as an

important aspect of Sarasota County's Branding and Communication Initiative.

Obviously, if the members of the Green Business Partnership experience increased business as a result of their membership, it will be a significant encouragement for other businesses to join and go through the certification process.

As a long-term strategy, Sarasota County might collaborate with an E-Commerce vendor and establish a common E-Commerce site for members of the Green Business Partnership. This could become a source of revenue for the County.

Recommendation 6: Constitute a post-certification program for Green Businesses – in the form of a Green Business Network – perhaps in association with the recently formed Sarasota Chamber of Commerce Green Council

Every member of the Green Business Partnership interviewed by the GUD team strongly recommended that the Green Business Partnership undertake a coordinated set of post-certification activities with the members of the Green Business Partnership.

The GUD team recommends that the Green Business Partnership constitute a post-certification Green Business Network that could undertake a variety of networking and educational events and other activities to encourage members of the Green Business Partnership to network with each other, learn from one another, and collaborate in encouraging new businesses to participate in the program.

Recommendation 7: Encourage Green business-to-business (B-B) transactions through the Green Business Network, government purchasing programs, and other means

At the meeting of members of the Green Business Partnership organized for the GUD team by the Coordinator of the Program, a number of the business leaders present had not met each other. At the end of the meeting, in two instances, Green Businesses were pursuing doing deals with each other.

One of the most important functions of a post-certification Green Business Network will be to encourage members to do business together and undertake joint projects.

Sarasota County has an Environmentally Preferable Procurement Ordinance that, in part, states that:

“The County is committed to the procurement of products and services that minimize negative environmental and social impacts and emphasize long-term values. Preference shall be given to products and services that have a lesser or reduced effect on human health and the environment when compared to other products and services that serve the same purpose.”

An enhanced Green Business Partnership could provide regular information on the categories of County purchases and encourage all appropriate Green Business Partnership members to take advantage of Sarasota County’s commitment to Environmentally Preferable Procurement.

Recommendation 8: *Establish an advanced program to save additional money and resources, perhaps in association with True Market Solutions*

Some of the Green Business Partnership members interviewed by the GUD team indicated an interest in going beyond the check-list approach of the Green Business Partnership certification to infuse sustainability into their operations and culture more deeply, leading to improved profitability.

There are various organizations that offer this service. Members of the GUD team have experience working with one of these organizations, True Market Solutions and recommend exploring the possibility of working with that organization to provide an advanced program. True Market Solutions uses peer learning Sustainability Circles and e-Learning tools to make this process affordable.

Benefits include:

- Enhanced profitability.
- Reduced costs and risks.
- Increased energy efficiency.
- Reduced carbon footprint.
- Increased productivity.
- Stronger brand integrity.

Recommendation 9: *Implement a program for encouraging initiation, expansion, attraction, and retention of Green Businesses in Sarasota County*

The Sarasota County Business Development Network, (Recommendation 1 in *Prosperity in Paradise*), is designed to provide assistance to Clean Tech Businesses and businesses in general, particularly Green Businesses, with:

- A capital pipeline.
- A business acceleration support system.
- Entrepreneurship development.
- Intellectual property commercialization.
- Business expansion and retention assistance.
- Acquisition of appropriately trained workforce.

This Initiative should specifically include encouragement for any business participating in the Business Development Network that is not already a member of the Green Business Partnership to become a member. At the same time, every business that goes through Green Business Certification with the Green Business Partnership should be referred to the Business Development Network for whatever assistance is relevant.

A Business Development Network can be a significant contributing factor in encouraging the initiation and expansion of Green Businesses in Sarasota County and it can also be utilized as an aspect of business attraction efforts, and incorporated in the business attraction dimension of the Communications Strategy (Recommendation 7 in *Prosperity in Paradise*) that will, among other things, be focused on bringing Green Businesses to Sarasota County.

PART FOUR: IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation Steps

The implementation steps for the Green Business Initiative are straightforward. They include:

- Making the decision to expand.
- Determining the scope of the expansion and the budget needed.
- Identifying the source(s) of funding (with the local foundations as a potential source for seed funding).
- Hiring the staff.
- Producing detailed expansion plans, carefully integrated with the other recommendations in Sarasota County's Sustainable Economic Development Strategy. (See *Prosperity in Paradise* for a full presentation of the recommendations.)
- Step-by-step implementation of the expansion plans.

Since there is a strong foundation to build on, implementation can happen quickly and efficiently.

PART FIVE: CONCLUSION

Expansion of the Green Business Partnership can be one of the anchors of Sarasota County's Sustainable Economic Development Strategy. Because of Sarasota's County's commitment to environmental quality and because of the significant savings typically resulting from Green Business Certification, the goal should ultimately be for most, if not all, of Sarasota County's businesses to be Green Businesses.

As Green Businesses grow and thrive in Sarasota County they create jobs, wealth, and tax revenue. Also they serve as potential markets for Clean Tech Businesses located in the County, leading to a balanced approach to Sustainable Economic Development.