

Sarasota County as a Center for Innovation in Energy and Sustainability

Energy Economic Zone

A fresh approach to land planning, Sarasota County's Energy Economic Zone (EEZ) is positioned to implement sustainable development practices and provide a model for other communities on how to become more environmentally and economically sustainable.

In 2009, the Florida Legislature created the Energy Economic Zone program (HB 5013). Florida's Department of Community Affairs then designated Sarasota County as one of only two pilot project Energy Economic Zone communities statewide. Miami Beach is the other. The U.S. Department of Energy has committed \$1.5 funding for Sarasota County to explore energy efficient solutions under this legislation.

With this pilot program, Sarasota County has an unprecedented opportunity to create an energy- efficient and independent community, resilient to the forces of nature and economic cycles.

This new land planning approach will require changes to the county's comprehensive plan, specifically:

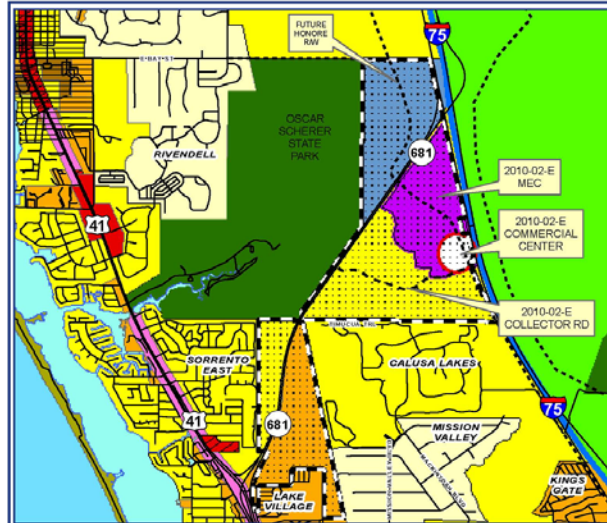
- Future Land Use Plan Map
 - Major Employment Center (MEC)
 - Village I Commercial Center
 - New collector road
 - Full I-75 interchange at SR 681
- Supportive text changes
- Goals, Objectives and Policies
 - Greenhouse gas reduction
 - Low impact design strategies
 - Multi-modal opportunities

Public hearings are scheduled by the Planning Commission on May 20, 2010, and the County Commission on June 23, 2010. All comprehensive plan changes will be presented to the County Commission for adoption consideration in October 2010.

Where is Sarasota County's Energy Economic Zone?

The EEZ is located at State Road 681 and I-75, roughly midpoint of the county, and includes the largest tracts of undeveloped land within our urban boundaries.

Three private landowners there have committed to work with Sarasota County on green economic development, providing a rare opportunity to "get it right" when it comes to land planning.



This map indicates proposed future land use at the Energy Economic Zone site.

What is an Energy Economic Zone?

The EEZ is part of a long-range strategy complementing countywide initiatives including land uses that will help promote...

- A diverse job market
- Low impact design (LID)
- Greenhouse gas reduction
- A platform to retain and attract “clean technology” and “green business”
- Multimodal transportation opportunities

The Low Impact Design (LID) approach to land development aims to reduce the volume of stormwater runoff by controlling it close to its source and replicating natural hydrology. This interdisciplinary, collaborative, holistic approach is evolving in Sarasota County. Manual LID techniques including detention with biofiltration, pervious pavement, stormwater harvesting and green roofs can enhance the local environment, protect public health, and improve community livability.

The multimodal plan for land use and transportation enhances the “jobs to housing” balance. It includes a network of green radial corridors with opportunities for external connections, links Major Employment Center/Commercial areas with residential areas and includes road network to accommodate Low-Speed and Neighborhood Electric Vehicles. The plan links habitats and facilitates movement of people and wildlife; and provides opportunities to connect to a regional system.

Greenhouse gas emission reduction results from tying the themes presented above together. While well intended, conventional zoning codes and plans instead dispersed development across regions, resulting in larger lots and greater water use, longer commutes and congestion, and energy inefficient building layouts. Thus, a shift to energy-efficient land use requires attention to compact design, green building features, a mix of uses and job opportunities, and shared amenities such as parking, landscaping, stormwater control and streets.

Why create an Energy Economic Zone?

Sarasota County has gained a reputation as a sustainability leader in environmental quality. For long-term community prosperity, we need to also grow our strengths regarding economic opportunities and health and well-being.

Who will benefit?

Residents, businesses and the environment will benefit, as the EEZ focuses on:

- Decreased urban sprawl and increased energy efficiency. Moving jobs and housing closer together will reduce pollution, congestion and transportation costs.
- Mixed-use compact development, positioning more services within a shorter distance easily accessible by walking or biking
- “Green” development and career opportunities to create more economic opportunities
- Energy efficiency that translates directly into profit, as well as increased sustainability including environmental and community health

What incentives will this program offer?

During the 2010 comprehensive plan amendment cycle, Sarasota County will explore ways to incentivize...

- Mixed-use communities, with consideration for jobs and housing balance
- Basic infrastructure needs
- Greenhouse gas reduction practices

And grow economic success in our area!

What can individuals and businesses do?

Green Business Partnership - The county’s innovative Green Business Partnership (GBP) encourages environmental stewardship and recognizes businesses, business organizations and local governments that make an extra effort to operate in an environmentally responsible manner. The GBP was initiated through a grant awarded by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection to Sarasota County. For more information, go to www.scgov.net/GreenBusiness.

Energy efficient retrofits - Sarasota County is poised to launch a homeowner incentive program in Summer 2010 providing rebates and low income loans to encourage energy efficient retrofits on existing properties. To be notified when the program launches, send an email to sustainablesarasota@scgov.net and request that you be put on a notification list.

Florida House Learning Center

The Florida House is a demonstration facility and grounds showcasing energy saving, environmentally friendly, healthy materials and methods currently available to the public. Volunteer opportunities are available to participate in a new sustainable community training program in preparation for hosting visitors in the fall of 2010. Contact <http://sarasota.extension.ufl.edu/FHLC/FlaHouseHome.shtml>

Links to more information

Sarasota County Sustainability Home <http://www.scgov.net/Sustainability/default.asp>

Florida Department of Community Affairs – Energy Economic Zones
www.dca.state.fl.us/fdcp/dcp/energyz/index.cfm

Email your questions or comments to energycenter@scgov.net.

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