High Value-Added Green Economic Development for Sarasota County
Bureau of Economic and Business Research, University of Florida

Overview

The Florida Legislature established the Energy Economic Zone Pilot Program during the 2009 session to address economic development and the creation of energy efficient land use patterns. The Department of Community Affairs was authorized to implement the Pilot Program to develop a model of sustainable development for use by other communities. The Program is intended to further discourage sprawl, develop energy efficient land use patterns, and create greenhouse gas reduction strategies. Sarasota County and Miami Beach were selected as the two locations for the pilot Energy Economic Zones.

Both in the energy economic zone, and in general, Sarasota County is interested in fostering economic development that is: 1) high value-added; 2) diversified away from over reliance on retirees, tourism, and growth; and 3) environmentally friendly, or, green. To more efficiently and effectively meet the county’s goals in that regard, officials and staff needed information that would help form a firmer understanding of useful and appropriate ways to define and measure green economic development and to construct and utilize economic development incentives. Sarasota County commissioned this report by the Bureau of Economic and Business Research (BEBR) at the University of Florida (UF) to provide such information.

The 159 page report is organized into seven sections, beginning with a brief introduction.

Section 2 Sarasota's Economy and High Value-added Jobs provides a broad consideration of the current state of Sarasota’s economy generally and its current job structure in particular. It considers how Sarasota’s job structure evolved to its current state, and, in broad strokes, the drivers of job structure and the kinds of things likely to improve it.

Section 3 Definition of Green Jobs provides an extensive consideration of green economic activity and green jobs. The discussion in this section reviews why the topic is important and what other states and government agencies have done before offering a definition that would seem most defensible and useful for Sarasota’s purposes. Since energy efficiency and cleanliness are critical aspects of a green economy,

Section 4 Some Economics of Clean Electricity and Energy Efficiency considers the basic economics of renewable energy and energy efficiency.

Section 5 Some Specific Possibilities for Green Economic Development applies the ideas developed in earlier sections to particular possibilities for green economic development: a) green production of energy; b) energy efficiency and conservation; c) research and development; d) healthcare delivery; and e) aquaculture.

Section 6 Designing Incentives to Encourage Sustainable Jobs in Sarasota County considers economic development incentives. Specifically, this section reviews and analyzes their theoretical justifications, how they are used in practice, how they might be used more effectively, the usefulness of current state and federal incentives, and some particular incentives currently used in Sarasota.

Section 7 concludes.