

**Stimulus Funds and Green Building -- for publication 2/5/2010**  
**by Andrew Baker, Charlotte County Director of Facilities Construction & Maintenance**

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) is an initiative that included many opportunities for state and local government to apply for federal funding for local projects. One such opportunity is the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) that was announced by the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE). The EECBG funding provides an opportunity for local governments to improve the efficiency of their existing buildings, promote the use of renewable energy, and assist with the creation and implementation of programs that increase conservation and efficiency awareness.

Over the last few years, Charlotte County Government has been working diligently throughout various departments to heighten the awareness of conservation and the utilization of renewable energy sources. Each department has contributed to an increased awareness of the importance of recycling, conserving our natural resources, and reducing wasted energy. Additionally, Charlotte County understands the opportunity that exists for the expansion of green businesses that are looking for a place to call home.

Our Charlotte County Facilities Department submitted an application on Dec. 14, 2009 for the Federal EECBG. The grant application included energy conservation improvements to the county jail and funds that would assist our efforts with education and training for county employees and the community.

Facilities will also be submitting the State EECBG grant in February. The projects under review for submittal are a renewable energy fire station and green sports lighting at a number of county parks fields. These projects have the potential to save \$45,000 annually in utility costs. The scoring criterion includes the project plans and project teams, leveraging of funds, job creation, energy savings and renewable energy production and reduction of greenhouse gases. The projects must also be sustainable and replicable and be able to contribute to the growth of the clean energy sector in Florida.

The energy efficiency and conservation program will continue to evolve and expand in order to help the county reduce carbon emissions and operational costs associated with energy consumption.

Last year the Board of County Commissioners passed an ordinance that mandated all county government buildings be built as "green" and have an industry-certified rating. There are currently four recognized rating systems: the US Green Building Council, the Green Building Initiative, the Florida Green Building Coalition and the National Association of Home Builders Green Building Program. Identifying a rating system that could be applied to all future construction was an important criterion in deciding which rating method to use. With that in mind, the County identified the USGB-LEED system as the county standard rating system. This system is the most widely known and universally accepted system, it provides a national benchmark against which county projects can be measured and it has been used by the Charlotte County School District construction projects built within the last few years. Using the LEED system, buildings are certified based upon a point system—the higher the points the higher the building certification. There are four certification categories: certified, silver, gold and platinum. The LEED system awards points for critical design categories such as water efficiency, energy efficiency, use of materials and resources, indoor air quality and site sustainability. Once the points and a number of prerequisites are met, the facility receives the corresponding level of certification. The first planned green-certified building for Charlotte County is the new Human Services building on Loveland Boulevard. It is a 7,800 square-foot facility that will house the County's Human Services Department and is funded by impact fees. It is adjacent the new State Department of Health facility that is currently under construction.