

Taking the GREEN WAY

by Mandy Stark Rogers

From reducing energy to conserving water and saving trees – and everything in between – Florida cities are “going green.” When Pembroke Pines Mayor Frank C. Ortis was sworn in as president of the Florida League of Cities last August, he announced the platform for his presidency: protecting our environment. He said that “as municipal governments, we are in the unique position to implement and coordinate local initiatives that will lead to significant and real reductions in energy use and its impact on global warming.”

Whether programs already are in place or new programs are on the horizon, one thing is for sure: Creating sustainable cities and communities is a priority for many municipal governments in Florida.

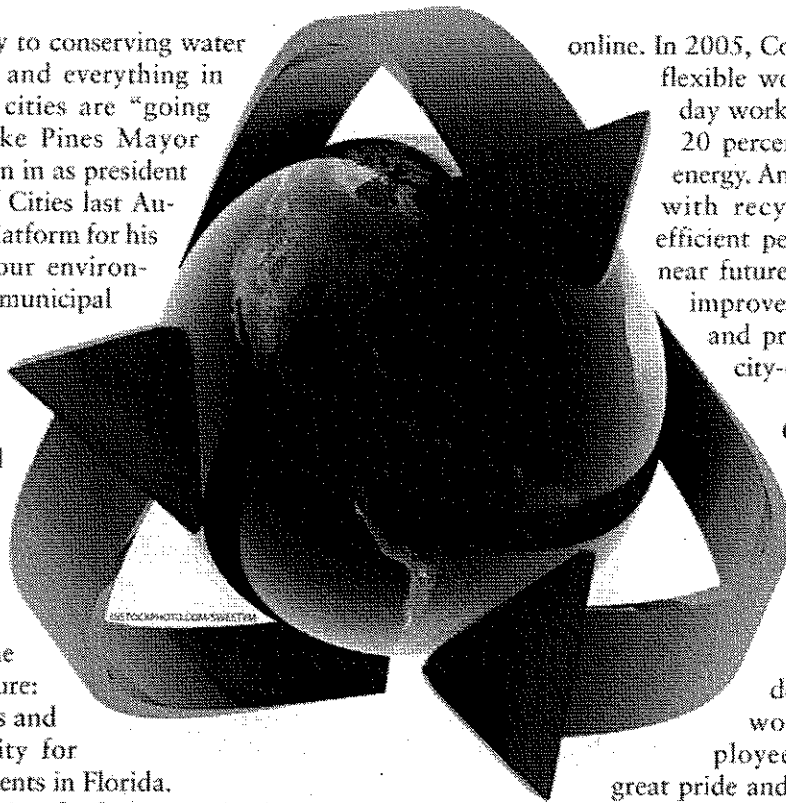
The **City of Coconut Creek**, for example, began its campaign for environmental awareness in its own offices. City Hall now uses paper products and cleaning materials that are either Green Seal Certified, recyclable or otherwise environmentally friendly. To use less water, the city installed low-flow toilets and waterless urinals. Many departments are going paperless by placing more functions and forms

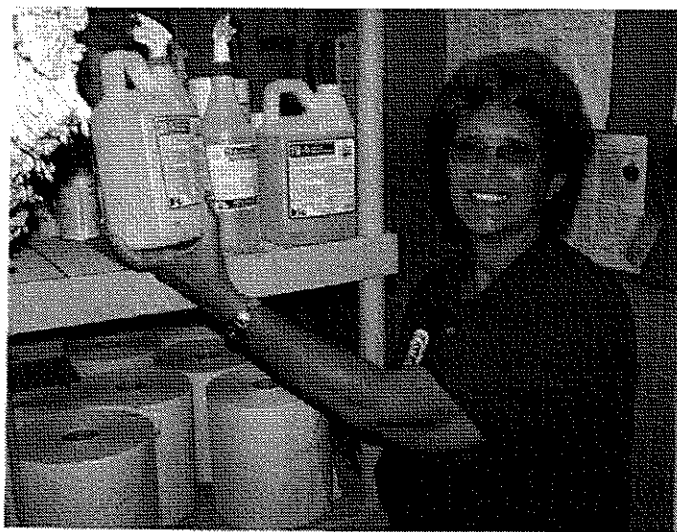
online. In 2005, Coconut Creek implemented flexible work schedules and a four-day work week at City Hall, saving 20 percent of commuter time and energy. And offices now are equipped with recycling bins and energy-efficient personal computers. In the near future, the city also will install improved air infiltration systems and provide more live plants in city-owned buildings.

“The City of Coconut Creek has long recognized the need for greater environmental awareness and the importance of taking a leadership role in protecting and preserving our valuable resources,” said Scott Sundermeier, the city’s public works director. “Our employees and community take great pride and eagerly participate in all

of our efforts.”

The **City of DeLand** recently created a water-conservation rebate program for all new residential construction and residential renovations. Based on the Florida Water Star program, builders of single-family homes may receive a 15-percent rebate on water and sewer impact fees when they have met conservation criteria related to landscaping,





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landscape irrigation and indoor conservation measures. Criteria for landscaping relate to use of natural or existing vegetation. Credit also is awarded for low-volume irrigation and low or no irrigation. A third area of credit is for the use of interior appliances that utilize low water flow. Credit also is available for interior fixtures such as hot water tanks that are energy-efficient and meet the Energy Star criteria.

Gainesville Regional Utilities (GRU) partnered with a home-improvement store to offer energy-efficient room air-conditioning units to GRU electric customers in June 2007. Customers were asked to bring in their old, inefficient units for recycling. They paid a \$20 fee for the brand-new unit. GRU worked with staff from the **City of Gainesville** Public Works Department and the store to exchange 111 inefficient room AC units within two hours.

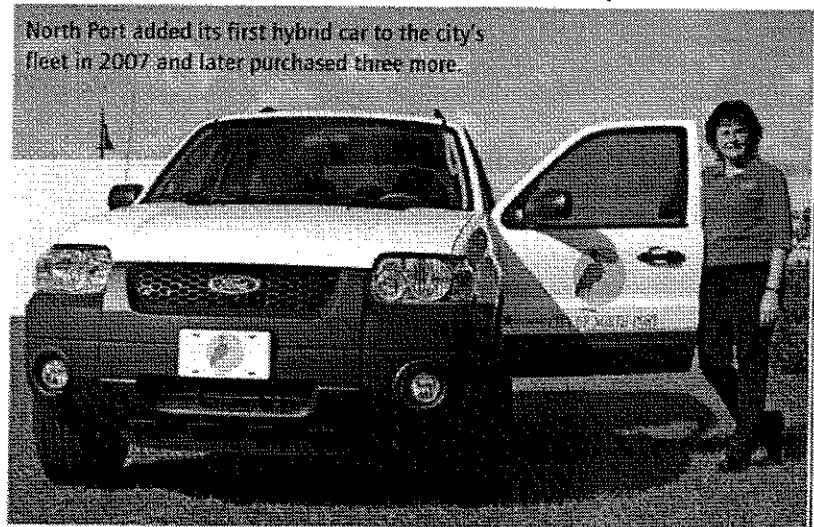
"We identified three neighborhoods in East Gainesville and a West University Avenue public housing complex where most of the residents use room AC units as the primary way to cool their home," said Amy Carpus, a conservation analyst at GRU. "We got the word out to them, and at 6:40 a.m. on the day of the promotion, a line had already formed in front of the store. It was pouring down rain that morning too, so we were really enthusiastic about the turnout."

Gainesville also provides incentives under the Gainesville Green Building Program to encourage environmentally friendly building. Some of the incentives include fast-track permitting, and discounts on permitting. For example, builders of green single-family homes receive a 25-percent discount on permitting fees.

The **City of Hollywood** Green Team Advisory Committee, a collaboration of 13 regular members and seven ex-officio members from the public and private sectors, was created to guide the city's efforts to reduce energy consumption and

greenhouse gas emissions. The committee was created by a resolution of the mayor and City Commission in September 2006 to assist the commission in identifying climate protection targets and recommending actions to help achieve those targets. The committee has recommended certification through the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building Rating System for new construction and major renovation projects, and has established residential recycling goals citywide.

The **City of North Port** has made many efforts of its own to "go green" since 2007. To work toward becoming a "Green City" as designated by the Florida Green Building Coalition, North Port added its first hybrid car to the city's fleet in 2007 and later purchased three more. In addition, the city created an Environmental Services Division, which is responsible for the environmental assessment of proposed projects within the city, as well as providing public education and community outreach programs. The division also works with state and regional agencies to create management plans and enforce state environmental regulations. In addition, the North Port City Commission adopted a resolution to begin the process of becoming recognized as a "Green City."



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The **City of Orlando** has its own green initiative in the works. In 2007, the city introduced Green Works Orlando, its first comprehensive plan to protect natural resources, encourage environmentally friendly lifestyles and business practices, and engage everyone who lives, works and visits Central Florida in the effort to go green. Green Works Orlando has five "pillars" that serve as the operational foundation of the plan. They are:



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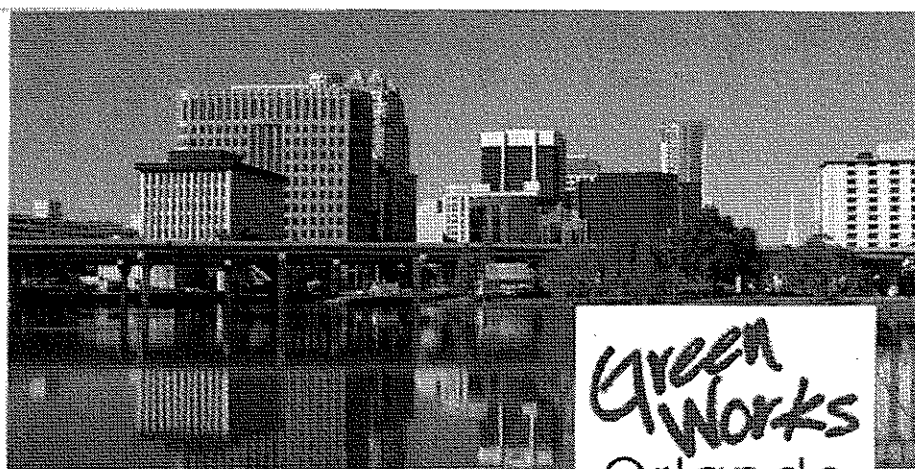
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Continued from page 33.

**Green
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Orlando**

MAYOR DYER'S
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- ▶ Energy efficiencies and green buildings
- ▶ Transportation
- ▶ Sustainable infrastructure and conservations
- ▶ Green spaces
- ▶ Advocacy and education

The City of Orlando is embracing environmental sustainability and social responsibility into its collective organizational and community development strategies.

"Green Works Orlando charts an ambitious course for us with the goal of making Orlando one of the most environmentally friendly cities in America," Orlando Mayor Buddy Dyer said. "One of the chief responsibilities of being an environmentally conscious city is in the area of communication. We want to connect with everyone who lives, works and visits our Central Florida home and show them ways they can make a positive environmental impact at home or at work."

The **City of Stuart** has begun its own strategy to raise residents' environmental awareness. On October 1, 2007, the city implemented a new single-stream recycling program. Residents no longer need to separate recyclable materials. All recyclables can be tossed into one blue, 68-gallon cart and wheeled to the street, making it easier for residents to participate in the program and increasing Stuart's average weekly recycling tonnage by 236 percent. Stuart also adopted "Sammy Sailfish" as its recycling mascot, and plans to use it for all educational and promotional campaigns.

Meanwhile, in the **City of Sunny Isles Beach** Government Center, city employees are making every effort to help preserve their environment by recycling cardboard, newspaper, white office paper, commingles (tin cans, plastic containers, aluminum cans, etc.), compact fluorescent lamps (most of the bulbs contain mercury), electronic ballasts, ink cartridges and toner.

Finally, the Florida Green Building Coalition has designated the **City of Tallahassee** as a "Green City," making it the second city in Florida to receive the honor. The Green Local Government Standard designates Green Cities and Green Counties for outstanding environmental stewardship. Some of the most notable initiatives that contributed to this accomplishment are the city's Green Fleet, which includes alternative-fuel vehicles such as biodiesel, compressed natural gas and hybrid vehicles; educational programs that heighten awareness among city staff and local students; recycling programs that include curbside recycling and creative recycling marketing strategies; and a variety of energy and water conservation initiatives.

Going green means carrying out simple solutions, such as recycling, as well as taking on large-scale projects, such as building energy-efficient structures. Whatever the case, Florida cities have taken steps to make life better for current residents and to ensure a clean, healthy and sustainable environment for generations to come.

Mandy Rogers is advertising and publications specialist for the Florida League of Cities.