

**April 30, 2009**

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## **Sarasota County receives national award for economic stimulus initiative**

Sarasota County has received the Thomas H. Muehlenbeck Award for excellence in local government. The recognition is based on the county's economic stimulus initiative and is presented by the Alliance for Innovation.

The Alliance for Innovation is a network of local government professionals seeking innovation and governmental excellence. The Alliance for Innovation is the premier innovation-based network serving local government. It was created from a partnership between International City/County Management Association (ICMA), Arizona State University (ASU) School of Public Affairs and the Innovation Groups.

The award will be presented to Sarasota County on May 14 at the Transforming Local government conference in Corpus Christi, Texas.

According to the Alliance announcement, "Well over a year ago, the community and the Board of County Commissioners recognized the potential to increase a local economic stimulus through an accelerated capital improvements program and the need to diversify the economy.

"Beginning in January 2008, the County detailed an economic stimulus program, received public support, and began aggressively creating jobs and business activity. The Sarasota community, through its own resolve and capabilities, moved to independently build an economic stimulus platform for the benefit of its citizens.

"At the time, no federal or state economic stimulus funds were available to accelerate capital construction projects. Because Sarasota County has already organized a multi-pronged strategy for economic stimulus, community infrastructure is being built, and the opportunity to benefit from a federal stimulus package is maximized."

County voters last May approved plans by the Sarasota County Commission to borrow up to \$300 million to fast-track dozens of projects over 72 months. The initiative is expected to create more than 2,000 jobs and stimulate the local economy.

No new taxes are involved for the projects. They are already funded by the penny sales tax, which was approved by voters in November 2007. About \$190 million in projects are being fast-tracked. About \$100 million worth of construction can begin within 12 months, and the balance can begin as soon as design work is completed.

Bonding and constructing these projects now saves money because construction costs are low. Bonding also allows the county to begin construction now instead of doing projects on a piecemeal basis.

For more information, contact the Sarasota County Call Center at 941-861-5000 and ask about the Thomas H. Muehlenbeck Award for excellence in local government.

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