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Regional Planner Earns LEED Accreditation

FORT MYERS, FL – (April 10, 2009) – The Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council (SWFRPC) announced that Jason Utley passed the US Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) accreditation exam. Utley is the sole LEED accredited planner in the government sector in Southwest Florida and one of only five urban planners in the six county region with LEED accreditation. Utley, a regional planner at the SWFRPC since 2006, works on Developments of Regional Impact (DRI) reviews and energy and climate change issues for the Council. His background includes more than seven years urban and regional planning experience in comprehensive planning, zoning, site plans and public involvement for state, local and regional planning entities in Florida and Georgia.

With LEED accreditation, Utley can suggest ways for development projects to earn LEED certification credits and identify opportunities for energy savings and design efficiencies. The SWFRPC will be better equipped to assist local jurisdictions throughout the region in developing strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and implement sustainable smart growth practices.

Southwest Florida is one of eight pilot areas within the United States to adopt Climate Prosperity as a key element of the region's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. Climate Prosperity advances the idea that innovation, efficiency and conservation in the use and reuse of resources is the best way to increase jobs, income, productivity, and competitiveness. The Climate Prosperity focus is green savings, green opportunities and green talent. The strategy aims to grow our regional economy and address climate change issues through improved energy efficiency and conservation for green savings, create jobs and develop green opportunities for innovators and entrepreneurs, promote renewable energy and increase green talent by training workers and assisting all types of businesses in implementing the strategy.

What is LEED certification?

In the United States and in a number of other countries around the world, LEED certification is the recognized standard for measuring building sustainability. Achieving LEED certification is the best way for you to demonstrate that your building project is truly "green."

The LEED green building rating system -- developed and administered by the U.S. Green Building Council, a Washington D.C.-based, nonprofit coalition of building industry leaders -- is designed to promote design and construction practices that increase profitability while reducing the negative environmental impacts of buildings and improving occupant health and well-being. The LEED rating system offers four certification levels for new construction -- Certified, Silver, Gold and Platinum -- that correspond to the number of credits accrued in five green design categories: sustainable sites, water efficiency, energy and atmosphere, materials and resources and indoor environmental quality. LEED standards cover new commercial construction and major renovation projects, interiors projects and existing building operations. Standards are under development to cover commercial "core & shell" construction, new home construction and neighborhood developments.

For more information about LEED, visit the U.S. Green Building Council's website at <http://www.usgbc.org/DisplayPage.aspx?CategoryID=19>.