

Community Report Card

Examining the quality of life in Sarasota County through data and indicators



The above illustration represents the Natural, Built, Economic, and Social environments. They are represented as a streetscape to highlight that despite being identified as separate environments, they interact to make up the whole of Sarasota County.

The Built Environment

The buildings and infrastructure we place on the natural environment

2007-2008 Community Report Card: Examining the quality of life in Sarasota County

Throughout the next year SCOPE's *Community Report Card* will use data about our community to share information about Sarasota County's quality of life. The *Community Report Card* hopes to ask and answer questions about our community and encourages you to do the same.

The next year is split into four sections, or environments: the natural, built, economic, and social. Each environment is highlighted for three months. Each month will focus on a different indicator, or data set, that reveals information about our community. Each indicator will use data to tell a story about a different aspect of life in Sarasota County.

social How we support human growth. Our community, families, systems of governance and decision-making.

economic Exchange, money, and the ways we create wealth or add value to our world.

built The buildings and infrastructure humans construct on the natural environment.

natural Everything that was part of Sarasota County before humans came along.



Graphic from the Florida House Institute for Sustainable Development

Through learning about these data and what they tell us our community can put together a picture of our quality of life. Throughout the coming year SCOPE will highlight community gatherings and sources of more information on our website. If you enjoy reading the *Community Report Card* and know someone else who you think would as well, please forward this to them! If you would like to get involved, SCOPE encourages you to download these supplements. You can find more information about the supplements and the whole report on our website at www.scopexcel.org. If you have immediate questions, comments or reactions to what you have just read, please email Kate Irwin at kirwin@scopexcel.org.

Question:

“How prepared will we be when a hurricane strikes?”

In 1960, Hurricane Donna hit our coast. Donna, a Category 5 storm, is remembered as one of “the big ones.” When Donna hit in 1960, there were 76,895 people living in Sarasota County. In 2004, another “big one” named Hurricane Charley followed an almost identical path across the state. When Charley hit Florida, there were 355,468 people living in Sarasota County. The tremendous population growth in the time between these two hurricane strikes parallels the history of population growth in the state of Florida.

For Floridians, hurricanes can cause serious personal injury and property damage. We try to limit the monetary and personal cost of future hurricanes in how we plan and build our community. Building sturdier structures, more and stronger shelters and limiting development in prone areas are all ways to mitigate the damage caused by hurricanes. This installment of the Community Report Card looks at indicators for each of these areas.

Indicator:

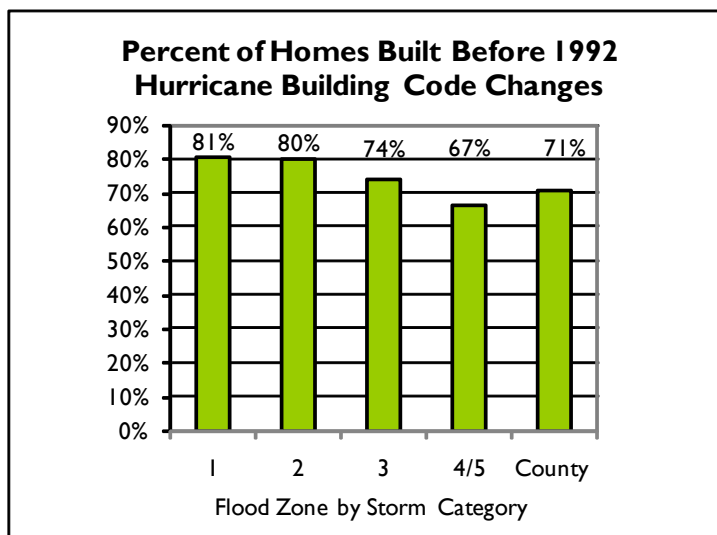
Sarasota County’s

Hurricane Preparedness

This indicator measures how prepared Sarasota County would be when a hurricane hit. The following pages will present a picture of Sarasota County’s hurricane preparedness by looking at three different things: the percentage of homes built to modern standards, the capacity of our hurricane shelters and the population density in our most vulnerable areas.

HOMES BUILT TO MODERN STANDARDS

These numbers tell us that most of our residential structures are not up to modern building codes. 71% of residential structures were built before 1992, under less stringent building codes. This is especially true of the areas in category 1 and 2 flood zones, (see flood zone map on page 7) where over 80% of structures were built before 1992. The flood zones with the highest percentage of homes built under stricter modern building codes are in the category 4 or 5 flood zone, which are less vulnerable to flooding from hurricanes.



How do we compare?

90% of Sarasota’s homes were built before 1995, meaning they are not up to current building codes. We have a higher percentage of pre-1995 buildings than Naples (76%) and Tampa (86%), but a lower percentage than St. Petersburg (96%) and Miami (92%). (Data is unavailable for 1992)

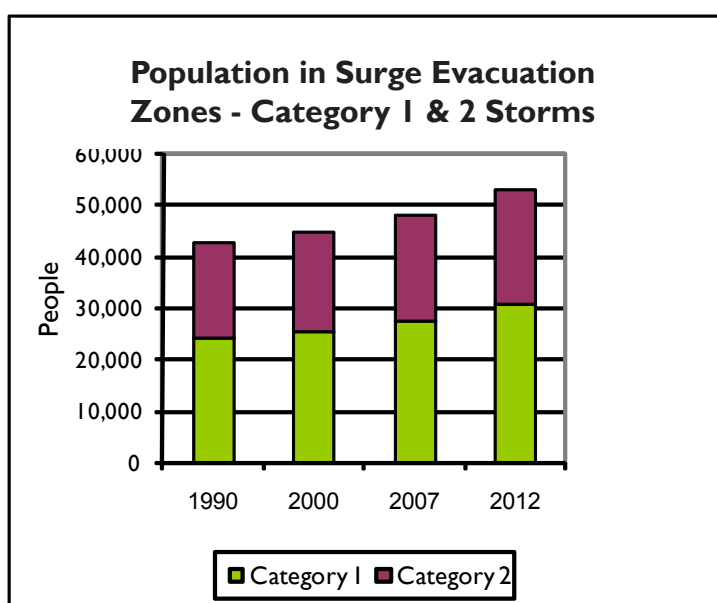
How is this measured?

The Sarasota County Property Appraisers office keeps records on each parcel of land and when the structure on it was built. This indicator was calculated from this database by Sarasota County GIS Services.

POPULATION DENSITY IN LOW-LYING AREAS

These numbers tell us that Sarasota County’s coastal flood zones are densely developed, but the development of hurricane-safe structures has occurred mostly in areas less vulnerable to hurricanes. The population in the category 1 or 2 storm surge zone has grown 13% between 1990 and 2007. In the same time period, the population in the category 4 or 5 surge zone increased 42%.

For example, the barrier island of Siesta Key has more housing units per square mile than any other part of the county. However, increases in density have stabilized in the last few decades, partly due to moratoriums on new development on the barrier islands.



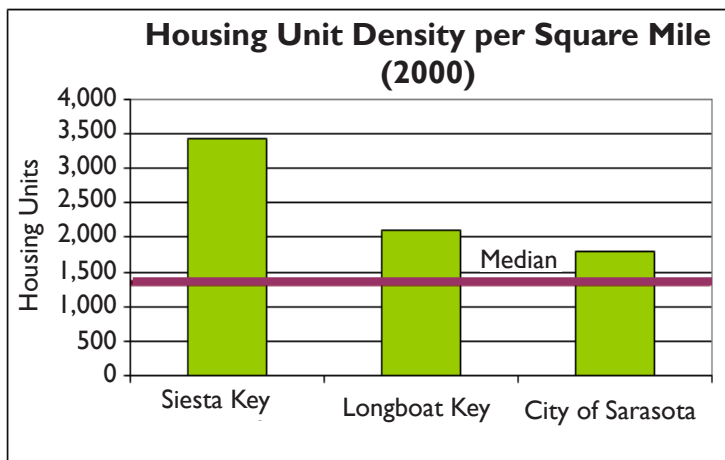
How do we compare?

Compared to other counties along the Gulf Coast, Sarasota County's population growth in category 1 or 2 storm evacuation zones has been moderate. Between 1990 and 2000, Sarasota's "vulnerable" population rose by 16%. The "vulnerable" population increased more in Manatee County (20%), Charlotte County (23%), and Lee County (26%).

How is this measured?

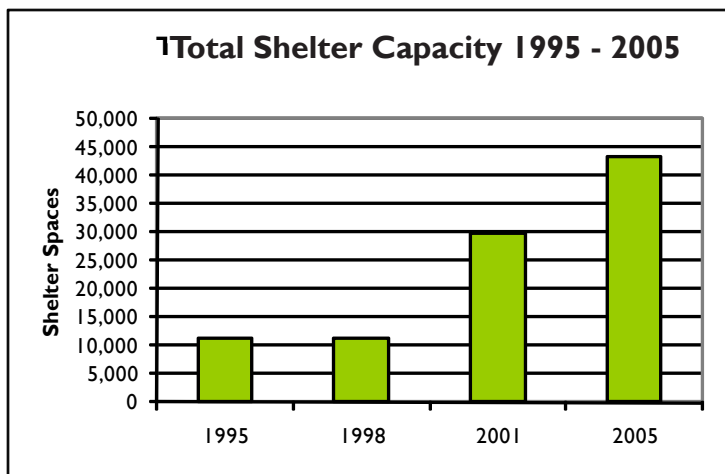
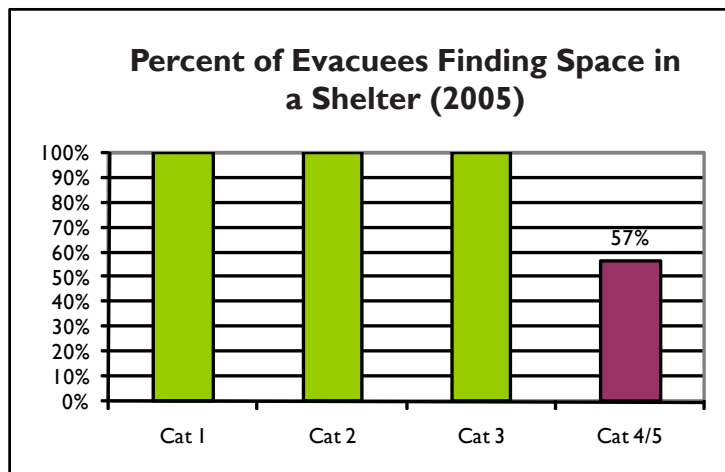
The historic density and population numbers are from the US Census. The median density is the mid point in density of all the populated places (census designated places) in our county.

The 2007 estimate and 2012 projections come from ESRI Estimates & Projections.



SHELTERS IN SARASOTA COUNTY

The numbers tell us Sarasota County has a surplus of shelter capacity during less dangerous storms. However, in a category 4 or 5 storm, nearly 20,000 people seeking a public shelter would have no accommodations. As the chart below shows, we have been steadily increasing the amount of shelter space available. Capacity in 2005 is almost quadruple the level in 1995.



How is this measured?

Shelters are counted and monitored by the Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council.

How do we compare?

Sarasota County, like the state of Florida, is adding shelter space but still faces a deficit in a worst case scenario. The state has plans to build new shelters and retrofit buildings to eliminate the deficit by 2011.

Linkages

Natural Environment:

Dense coastal development is predisposed to destruction in a hurricane, but limiting coastal development also enhances coastal ecosystems by providing them with more habitat.

Built Environment:

Many of the things contributing to an area being vulnerable to hurricanes also make it a destination for people. We build by the beach and rivers because they are places that humans find pleasant. Because of this, they also tend to be areas that are busy and full of traffic.

Economic Environment:

Our tourist industry depends on a safe environment with shelter in case of a storm. Coastal development is an economic engine for our community, but that same growth presents risk if a storm strikes Sarasota. Individually, if your home or rental meets the stronger building standards, it is less likely to be damaged and inconvenience you in the aftermath of the storm.

Social Environment:

Hurricane preparedness links to the social environment through safety - home structure standards and shelter capacity are both linked to community safety.

Why is this important?

Our coastal ecosystem and community are beautiful, but vulnerable. While we may not be hit by a hurricane this year or the next, the possibility is always with us. We can not change the fact that we are vulnerable, but we can plan for it on both an individual and collective level.

The strength of our individual residential structures is determined by how well they will weather a storm. The high percentage of residential structures built before code improvements suggests that our homes are vulnerable, particularly those right on the coast. Since older structures may be less safe, residents should be aware of the structural integrity and retrofitting options for their home when making evacuation plans.

Nearly 20,000 people seeking a public shelter in a category 4 or 5 storm will not find space.

The primary goal of local government as a hurricane approaches is to reduce the harm to people. Our government is aware that the coastal areas are most vulnerable to storm surge, based in part on their density. However, evacuating coastal areas is difficult because many of them, especially barrier islands, only have one route off the island. Compounding the problem is that these areas are so low-lying that many evacuation routes are flooded and impassable even before a hurricane arrives, making last-minute evacuation impossible. Thus, it is important that people know their evacuation zone and have a plan for evacuating.

Individual efforts and governmental preparation overlap in our county's shelters. It is vital that the government know how many people it can safely house during a storm. It is equally vital that individuals know where their designated shelter is located, and if it will have capacity to house them. Overall, the most important and effective way to prepare for a hurricane is to be informed.

What else would we like to know?

Our county and city governments have made it a priority to keep records of hurricane information. It would be helpful to have information about the post-storm capabilities of the many different first responders and the capabilities of the local agencies to help care for the storm survivors. This are data that exist, but are beyond the scope of this indicator.

We would also like to know what people will really do in an evacuation scenario. The table below shows what people *said* they would do in response to an evacuation order. However, this does not always match up with reality. This information depends on personal decisions made on the day of the storm.

What can I do?

- Assess your home to see how well it would fare in a storm. Retrofits are available for older homes.
- Have a hurricane evacuation plan for your household and pets.
- If you are in an area that does not need to evacuate, consider opening your house to some of your friends and family who are in evacuation zones for the duration of the storm.
- Educate yourself about development in areas susceptible to hurricanes and vote for redevelopment codes that restrict development in prone areas.
- Learn more about how to help after hurricanes and get involved in emergency response. Information about classes on these subjects can be found at www.training.fema.gov.

Where people plan to go if evacuated

Leave County	34%
Public Shelter	24%
Don't Know	21%
Friends/Relatives	13%
Hotel	4%
Stay Home	2%
Other	2%

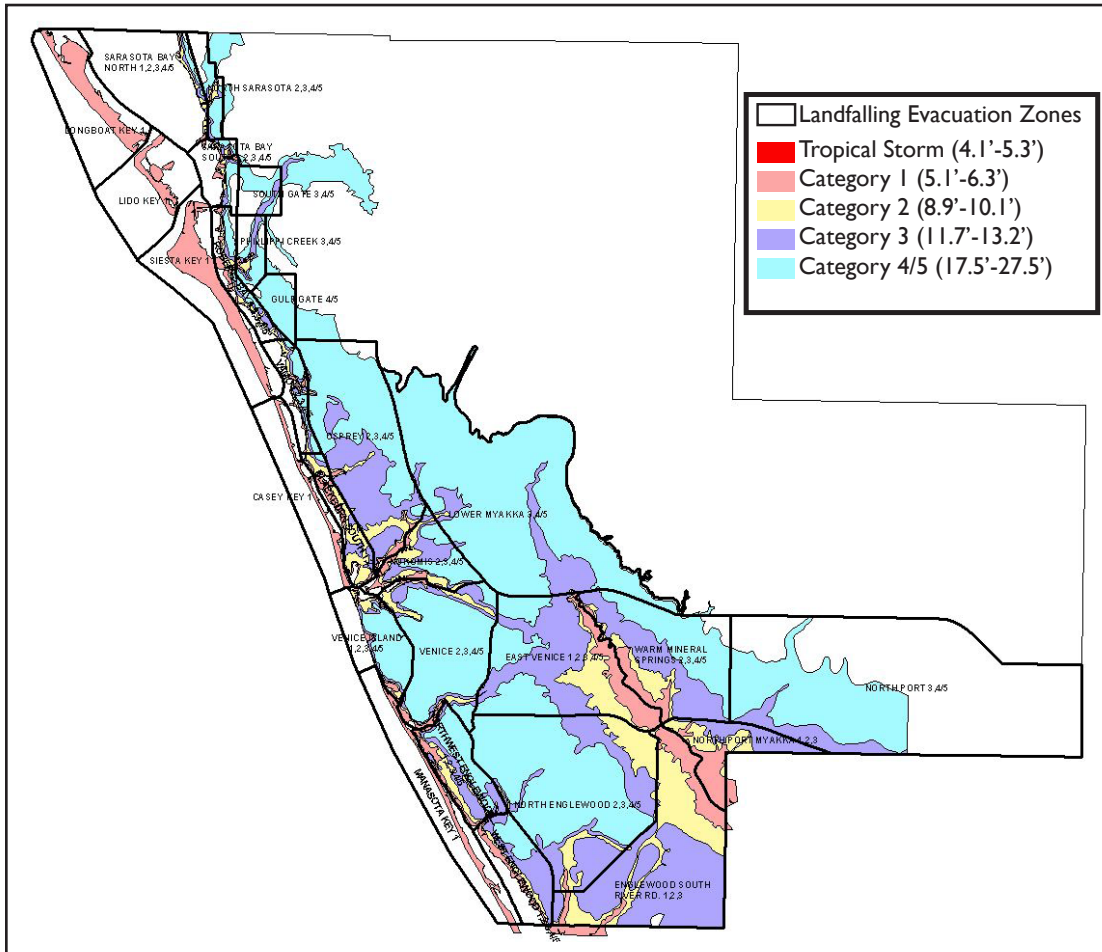
2001 Sarasota County Hurricane Evacuation Study

Reservations and Caveats

Not all homes built before the 1992 improvements are necessarily vulnerable, since all we know is that enforced building codes were not as strict before that date. There are retrofits for older homes to make them more hurricane resistant. A number of older homes have already done this, but the numbers in this report do not reflect this. Also, homes may have been built to modern standards before 1992 even though less stringent codes were in place.

Data Sources: US Census 2000 Sarasota County Hurricane Evacuation Study, ESRI Estimates and Projections **References:** Sarasota County Geographic Information Services **Illustrations** by Mark Villarreal

Storm Surge Evacuation Zones



Indicator Releases

Introduction	August
Accessibility	September
Water Quality	October
Connectivity	November
Hurricane Preparation	December
Transportation	January
Land Use	February
Jobs & Industry	March
Workforce Housing	April
Wealth & Income	May
Health	June
Education	July
Civic Engagement	August

What is SCOPE ?

“To engage our community in planning for excellence through a process of open dialogue and impartial research, to establish priorities, propose solutions, and monitor change to enhance the quality of life in Sarasota County.”

SCOPE is a not-for-profit organization that focuses on building community connections. Our goal is to engage a diverse group of people in conversations to look at what we want our future to be instead of problemsolving

Connected communities have:

- Lower rates of school dropout
- An increased ownership of the decision-making process
- Lower crime rates
- Fewer colds and heart attacks

the past. In addition to publishing a community indicators report (the *Community Report Card* you are reading), SCOPE conducts studies on topics such as Affordable Housing (2002), Mental Health (2003), and Family Violence (2004). Our two current studies are *Aging: The Possibilities* and *Race and Cultural Relations*.

If you were forwarded this message & would like to receive the *Community Report Card* in your inbox, please email kirwin@scopexcel.org. If you want to get connected with SCOPE and our community, please visit www.scopexcel.org or call (941) 365-8751