

# 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

From August 2007 through August 2008, 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, and each month will focus on a different indicator, or data set, that reveals information about our community. The indicators 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 learn more, 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](http://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](mailto:kirwin@scopexcel.org).

## Question:

### ***“Are we building in a way that makes sense?”***

Although our built environment rarely makes headline news, how we build has everything to do with our quality of life. Our health, our tax rates, how much we walk and how often we chat with our neighbors are all influenced by the way we choose to develop our cities and neighborhoods.

Most of us do not have to look far to recognize what has become the dominant trend in building, known as “sprawl”: office parks and big-box shopping centers, each with a parking lot that feeds into a large road, leading to disconnected subdivisions with wide, winding streets.

Sprawl appeared in part due to post-World War II government housing and highway programs that encouraged single family homes accessible by car. It lacks principles of traditional planning, leaving many inconvenienced by the environment they find themselves in.

By thinking more carefully about how we build, we can benefit from the principles of land use that make places special. These principles are the foundation of some of the most memorable, functional, and popular cities and towns in the world. If we focus on how we use land in Sarasota County, we can add character, convenience and quality to the many special places already in our community.

## Indicator:

# ***Land Use*** ***in Sarasota County***

**This indicator measures** our land use by looking at permits issued in unincorporated Sarasota County, the density of our population and the change in urbanized area over the past ten years. Together, these measures help us understand how we use and structure the built environment in Sarasota County.

## PERMITS: NEW BUILDING VS. DEMOLITION

**These numbers tell us** that we build new structures much more than we redevelop older structures. In 2006, 30,780 permits were issued for new buildings and 247 permits were issued for building demolition in unincorporated Sarasota County. In 2007, there were 25,172 permits issued for new buildings and 157 permits issued for demolition. This means that we are more than 100 times more likely to build on vacant land than to rebuild on used land.

### How is this measured?

The Sarasota County Government Planning Department counted how many permits were issued for new building and demolition. The permits are only for structures in unincorporated Sarasota County.

### How do we compare?

Comparison numbers are not readily available for other counties and cities in our region.

## DENSITY

**These numbers tell us** that density in our county has risen over the last 16 years. All areas except for the City of Venice (due to land annexation) are currently much denser than in 1990. The City of Sarasota has the highest density, with 3,759 people per square mile. The unincorporated (and more rural) sections of our county have the lowest density, with 662 people/square mile. The City of North Port is gaining density the fastest, doubling between 1990 and 2006. See chart on the following page.

### How is this measured?

Density is measured by dividing the population by the number of square miles. This produces an average of “person per square mile.”

### How do we compare?

Sarasota County averages 817 people per square mile, and is more dense than Charlotte (205 people/square mile) and Manatee Counties (356 people/square mile). Hillsborough County (951 people/square mile) is denser than our county.

## URBANIZED AREA

**These numbers tell us** that over the last 10 years, Sarasota County has spread outward rapidly. The growth is primarily occurring in and around the City of North Port, east of the City of Venice, and southeast of the City of Sarasota. See the map on the following page. In 2000, there were 285,893 people living in urbanized areas. The Census Bureau estimates that that number had increased 14% by 2006, to 332,767 people.

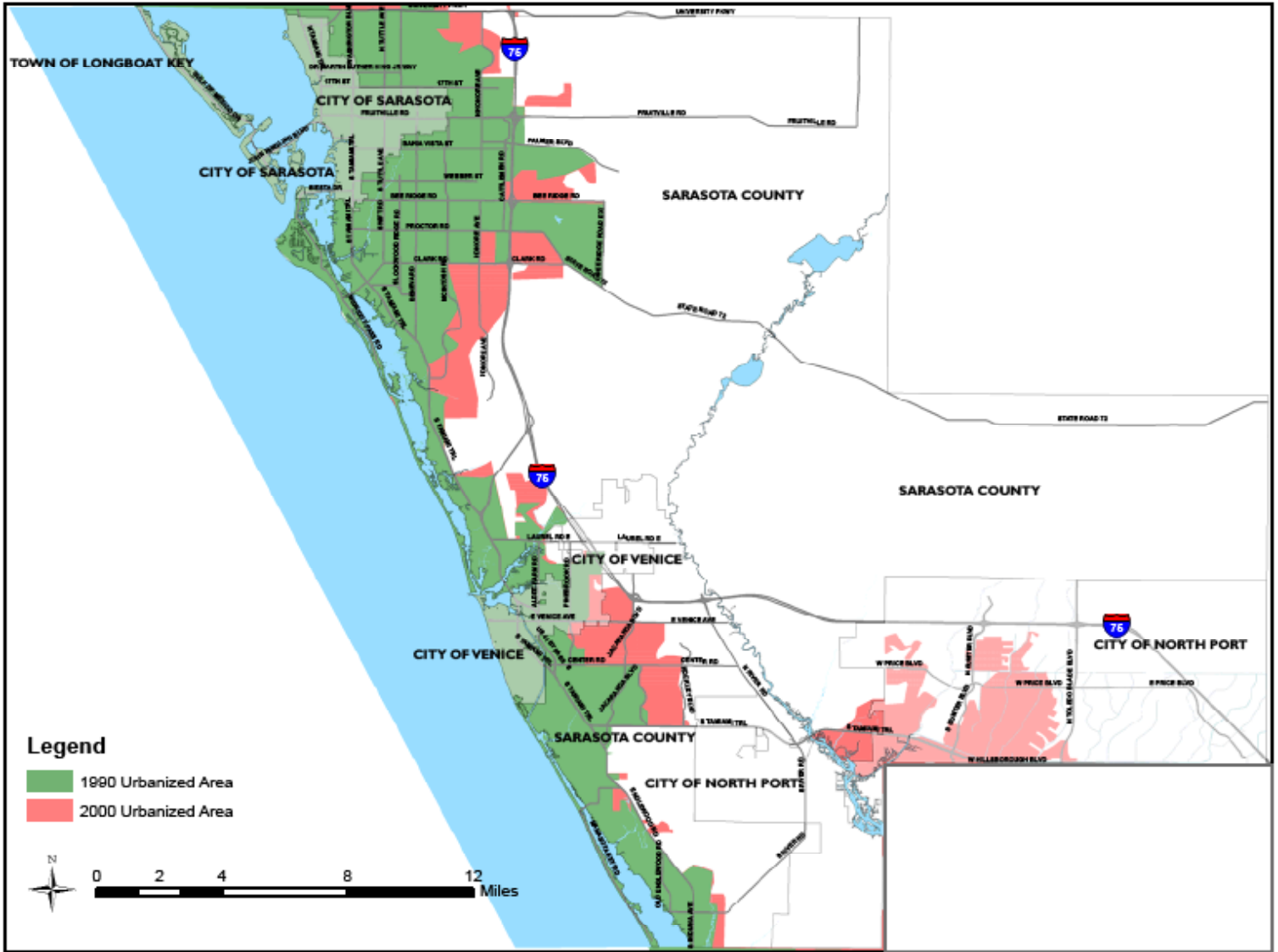
### How is this measured?

Urbanized areas are designated by the US Census Bureau as areas with more than 50,000 people.

### How do we compare?

In 2000, Sarasota County had more residents in urbanized areas (285,893) than Manatee County (242,476) and Charlotte County (29,825), but fewer than Hillsborough County (912,783).

# Sarasota County Urbanized Areas: 1990 and 2000



The above map shows the change in Urbanized Areas from 1990 to 2000. An Urbanized Area is defined by the U.S. Census Bureau as densely settled territory that contains 50,000 or more people. Note there is a slight difference in how Urbanized Area was measured in the 1990 and 2000 Census. (See the “Reservations and Caveats” section for more information)

## Density: People Per Square Mile

	1990	2000	2006	Change 1990-2006
<b>City of Sarasota</b>	3,541	3,609	3,759	6%
<b>Town of Longboat Key</b>	1,284	1,906	1,927	50%
<b>City of Venice</b>	5,822	1,672	1,338	-77%
<b>City of North Port</b>	211	307	461	118%
<b>Unincorporated</b>	512	603	730	42%
<b>Sarasota County</b>	597	702	817	37%

The area (square mileage) of unincorporated Sarasota County excludes areas over 8,000 acres which are preserved in perpetuity. The City of Venice is less dense because it encompasses more land (8.54 square miles in 1990, 16.13 square miles in 2006), while the true growth in the City of North Port is not captured in this chart, as it increased in land size (0.3 square miles in 1990, 1.4 square miles in 2008) and population.



This map is produced from Sarasota County GIS, and is representative information only.

The County does not warrant, guarantee, or assume any responsibility for geographic information completeness and/or accuracy.

This map should not be used as guide to navigation.

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Prepared by Sarasota County Planning & Development Services GIS Planning Services - Nov. 7, 2007

Sources: Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, Geography Division, 1990 and 2000 Urbanized Areas.

## Linkages

### Natural Environment:

Well-planned places demand less of the environment. Because they are more centralized, they consume less, pollute less, and allow for more wild and agricultural land preservation.

### Built Environment:

Land use is pertinent to many aspects of the built environment, including disaster preparedness. A well-connected road grid and transit system allows for easier and less costly evacuation. A grid system also allows for emergency vehicles to reach their destinations more quickly.

### Economic Environment:

Street-oriented development increases opportunity for small businesses to thrive by offering smaller and more affordable spaces on well-populated streets. It also stimulates spending—in enclosed malls, shoppers spend an average of \$57 an hour; in town centers, \$84.

### Social Environment:

Efficient land use can improve health. Because traditionally designed communities are built to be compact, they encourage residents to walk from place to place. The increased activity, in turn, improves health.

## Why is this important?

The way we shape our world shapes our lives. Land use is a broad theme that involves and influences many aspects of our daily lives and decisions, from the taxes we pay to the hours we spend on the road each day. Both locally and a globally, it determines how much we demand of the environment with reference to consumption and pollution.

One of the most striking differences between well-planned and sprawling places is how people get around. Good planning multiplies our options: walking, biking, riding public transit, or travelling by car. Additionally, we have better chances of living close to where we need to go. Insufficient planning leaves us dependent on cars, isolated from one another, less healthy, and paying unnecessary costs in time and money. (See image on Page 6)

Sarasota County and City governments are making efforts to encourage well-planned areas in our community. One example is the 2007 Sarasota County zoning rules that promote “Traditional Neighborhood Design.” These guidelines prioritize promoting quality communities with higher density mixed-use development, organized around transportation corridors. They also encourage preservation of natural systems while emphasizing neighborhood connectivity.

This connectivity often translates into savings for cities and citizens. Using a compact, pedestrian and bicycle friendly style of development can lower public and private capital costs of infrastructure by 16 percent. It is likely that land use practices will continue to be a focal point of discussions about Sarasota County.

Going forward, we must strive to create an opportunity for open visioning and planning processes. In such a process, neighbors, planners, and building professionals can come together to develop a plan for our community that utilizes these principles as a reference for how to build meaningful, attractive, safe and efficient places.



Diagram by Duany Plater-Zyberk & Company

## What can I do?

- Attend local planning meetings and encourage the use of these building principles. Support efforts in your community that promote efficient and people-friendly development.
- Vote for local candidates who take a big-picture approach to development and planning.
- Don't fight change and development—shape it! Be proactive about land use in your area. Propose or participate in creating a master plan for your neighborhood, and involve local government and businesses in the effort.
- Begin dialogues with friends about how the way we build affects our lives and our community's health. Write letters with your perspective to the newspaper.

## What else would we like to know?

The indicators reported here are limited in their reflection of how we build. An index of indicators would better reflect the state of our built environment from a land-use perspective. Index projects in other areas include items such as vicinity of dwelling units to a school, park, and transit stop, employment-housing balance, street connectivity, and land-use diversity. Such an index can be useful for neighborhoods to gain a more accurate perspective of how to alter design. However, many of these items are not measured in Sarasota County.

## Reservations and Caveats

Although building permits are a fairly accurate measure of how many new buildings are erected, they are not foolproof. Permits are required for a variety of structures, from hotels to backyard sheds. Demolition permits are also not a completely accurate measure of infill, since they do not necessarily mean that a new structure was built on the space used by the demolished building, only that an existing structure was destroyed.

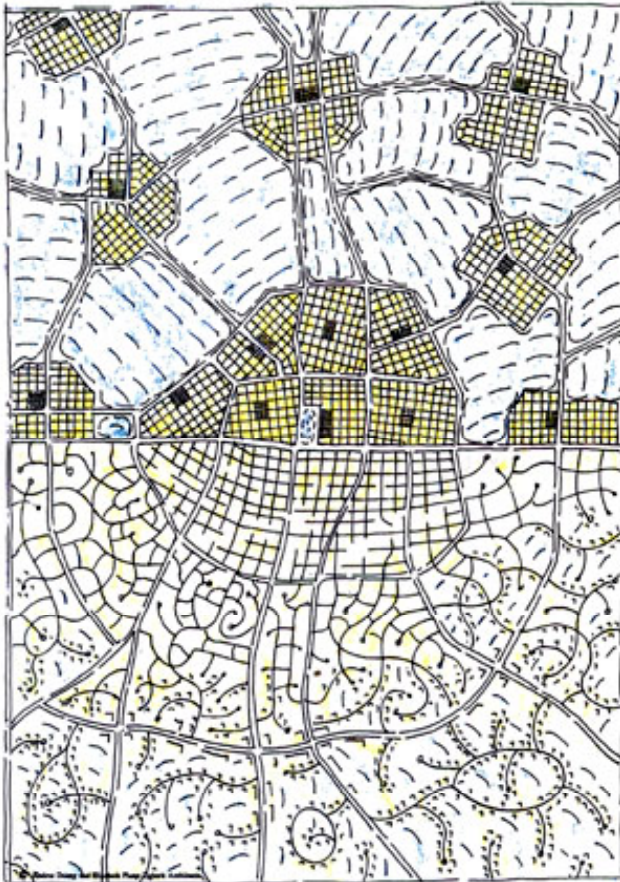
This report removes areas over 12.5 square miles which are preserved in perpetuity from density calculations, which gives a truer picture of the density of our built environment. However, the density for our neighboring counties has been calculated with preserved areas included, which lowers their density relative to ours.

Due to the 2000 U.S. Census' more stringent density requirements, some area that was classified as "urban" in 1990 was re-classified as "rural" in 2000. This does not reflect a change in the actual land, but instead a change in the measure. Also, the Urbanized Land Map does not take into account growth in Lakewood Ranch, since it was not part of in the 2000 US Census.

**Data Sources:** Sarasota County Planning & Development Services GIS Planning Services, U.S. Census Bureau, Bureau of Economic and Business Research (BEBR) **References:** <http://www.cnu.org>, <http://www.realitychecktampabay.org/RealityCheck.aspx>, **Illustrations** by Mark Villarreal

# Illustrating Traditional Neighborhood Development

## Traditional Neighborhood Development



**Suburban Sprawl**

Diagram by Duany Plater-Zyberk & Company

**Traditional Neighborhood Development**, or TND (upper section), also known as “new urbanism,” “neo-traditional” or “village style” development, includes a variety of housing types, a mix of land uses, an active center, walkable design, and often a transit option within compact neighborhoods. This is accomplished either through infill in an existing developed area or as a district-wide project. In contrast to the “sprawl” development pattern (lower section), TND preserves open space and neighborhood identity while offering many other benefits (mentioned above) to residents, businesses and lawmakers.

## Indicator Releases

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

## What is SCOPE ?

“To connect and inspire citizens to create a better community.”

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 the past.

- Connected communities have:**
- Lower rates of school dropout
  - An increased ownership of the decision-making process
  - Lower crime rates
  - Fewer colds and heart attacks

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](mailto:kirwin@scopexcel.org). If you want to get connected with SCOPE and our community, please visit [www.scopexcel.org](http://www.scopexcel.org) or call (941) 365-8751