

Atlantic Beach first community in Florida to earn LEED Silver label

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The Beaches town is the first in Florida considered a LEED Silver community, a designation backers say can matter for resilience and residents' well-being.

Atlantic Beach has landed a LEED designation for trying to live more sustainably.

The 14,000-person town is the first in Florida to win that recognition — it's considered a LEED Silver town, the third-highest designation — for its performance under a program the U.S. Green Building Council calls LEED for Cities and Communities. Several Florida communities have earlier LEED designations that are less specific.

The acronym is for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, a system of metrics the program uses for tracking a town's impact on fields including energy, water, waste, transportation, education, health, safety and prosperity.

The categories are meant to become yardsticks for a town's resilience and for the general well-being of people living there.

The silver designation left local officeholders "thrilled and proud," Mayor Ellen Glasser said this week, when they scheduled a dedication event Monday at 6 p.m. in the City Commission chamber at Atlantic Beach City Hall.

That designation shows "our commitment to lead and transform the future of our great state by creating a roadmap for success," Glasser said in a written announcement.

The label also leaves room for improvement.

“We want to make sure that we’re making some progress,” said Sarah Boren, a Green Building Council director who lives in Atlantic Beach and volunteers on a committee recommending next steps for the city.

Atlantic Beach began looking into LEED in January 2018, during a visioning process happening just a few months after the second hurricane in two years had rattled Northeast Florida, when sustainability was on many people’s minds.

Chasing the LEED designation pushed city offices to share information in new ways, City Manager Joe Gerrity said. He said that pattern will be repeated as the city’s LEED process continues, like when the city considers impacts on its carbon footprint while it’s making decisions on transportation and land use.

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