

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Riverwood, Florida Earns Audubon Green Community Award

RIVERWOOD, FL – The Riverwood community has earned the Audubon Green Community Award from Audubon International, a non-profit environmental organization. Riverwood becomes the first private community in Florida and the third entity in the state to earn the Audubon Green Community Award for their ongoing green initiatives.

Members of Audubon International’s Sustainable Communities Program are eligible for the award, which recognizes environmental achievement and is an intermediate milestone en route to earning rigorous designation as a Certified Audubon Sustainable Community.

Riverwood’s accomplishments include:

- *Reclaimed Water Project* – By partnering with the Southwest Florida Water Management District, Riverwood installed a system that uses reclaimed water for irrigation. The community reduced its use of potable water and became more environmentally friendly through partnerships while reducing costs and not hindering aesthetics.
- *Health and Wellness* – Amenities are integrated with the natural landscape through sidewalks and public and private roads. These promote a healthy lifestyle by offering walking, biking, golfing, swimming, and other activities rather than sedentary activities. Also, the volunteer-supported Virginia B. Andes Clinic offers medical care for the uninsured.
- *Wildlife Habitat* – As part of the community’s master plan, over 300 acres of open space were protected through conservation easements and restrictions. Educational signs posted around the community’s environmental areas encourage awareness about wildlife, and viewing platforms offer opportunities for viewing eagles and other sensitive species. As a demonstration project, residents are now working with the Florida Bat Conservancy to install bat houses that will provide alternative nesting sites in response to problems with bats nesting in people’s houses.
- *Outreach and Education* – An important priority for Riverwood has been to educate the community regarding environmental and sustainable stewardship. Ongoing programs and

efforts include the Living with Nature events and articles in the community newspaper and website about sound environmental practices and native species that are published several times a year.

- *Citizen Engagement and Environmental Commitment* – To engage residents and encourage environmental commitment, the community has extensive volunteer opportunities with a continued commitment to making sure the various programs are cultivated for increased participation. Community volunteers have assisted in raising funds, providing toys, and building homes each year in the region.

“As the first private community in the State of Florida to receive the Audubon International Green Community Award, Riverwood has demonstrated a strong commitment to embodying the ideals of sustainability—economic vitality, environmental protection, and social responsibility,” says Joanna Nadeau, Manager of the Sustainable Communities Program. “With the surrounding natural landscape of the ‘wild and scenic’ Myakka River, and Charlotte Harbor, an important Florida estuary, Riverwood has much to celebrate. It is a unique place filled with residents that care deeply about the place they call home.”

After a community sustainability plan is approved, communities in the program may apply for certification in the Sustainable Communities Program by demonstrating continuous progress towards goals in the plan under fifteen focus areas.

About Audubon International

Audubon International is a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) environmental education organization dedicated to providing people with the education and assistance they need to practice responsible management of land, water, wildlife, and other natural resources. To meet this mission, the organization provides training, services, and a set of award-winning environmental education and certification programs for individuals, organizations, properties, new developments, and entire communities. Through the Sustainable Communities and Green Neighborhoods Programs, Audubon International works to help community leaders and stakeholders embrace environmental stewardship and sustainability as a central element of planning, policies, and practices.

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