



Task force wants 'green living' to catch on Boca group aims to educate residents

By Patty Pensa South Florida Sun-Sentinel
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BOCA RATON - Laura Castanza saves leftover dishwater for her plants, feeds food scraps to her pets and recycles — adamantly.

Castanza is trying to live "green," making choices both large and small that have the least impact on natural resources. Now, Castanza and eight other [Boca Raton](#) residents want to take their commitment to the environment to the people.

"How can we increase participation by the community to green living?" she asked. "It's becoming a role model. You can't be talking about this and not living it."

The central mission of the city's new Green Living Task Force is to answer the question Castanza, who is co-chairwoman, posed. Already, the city joined forces with business and local college leaders to share ideas on how to turn the once-dubbed "pink city" green. The Green Living Task Force is an extension of the city's environmental efforts.

After a year, the group is supposed to issue a formal report with recommendations to the City Council. But in its first meeting this month, the group signaled it doesn't want to wait a year. It wants to do more — meeting twice a month — and send ideas to the council sooner.

"They are a very enthusiastic group," said Mike Woika, assistant city manager and the group's liaison. "They are eager to get things accomplished and make changes in the community."

Because the group just launched it has not settled on specific ideas of how to change residents' behavior or even what behaviors would be best if they were adopted en masse. Topics the task force likely will explore are: recycling, water use, landscaping, transportation and building materials, Woika said.

Education will be key, Castanza said. Co-chairwoman Susan Clemmons, a professor at [Florida International University](#), agreed.

"It's good to recycle but we want to address deeper things to encourage people to actually listen and change their behavior to support a greener Boca," Clemmons said.

Clemmons she sees environmental consciousness in people in the city, saying, "It could be because everyone's talking about it. There's definitely a value system."

Her own values were cultivated by her grandfather, who was an organic gardener and grew up on an organic dairy farm in Pennsylvania. Clemmons said she's "always striving to be greener" and one day hopes to have her own organic garden. She already collects rain in water barrels, composts and recycles — everything.

Councilman Michael Mullaugh said the task force will be instrumental in getting the word out on green practices to the community.

"These are the people who have the expertise," he said. "They would tell us whether we're on the right track. I think the task force is a great idea and will work wonderfully but I don't think it's job will be done in a year."

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