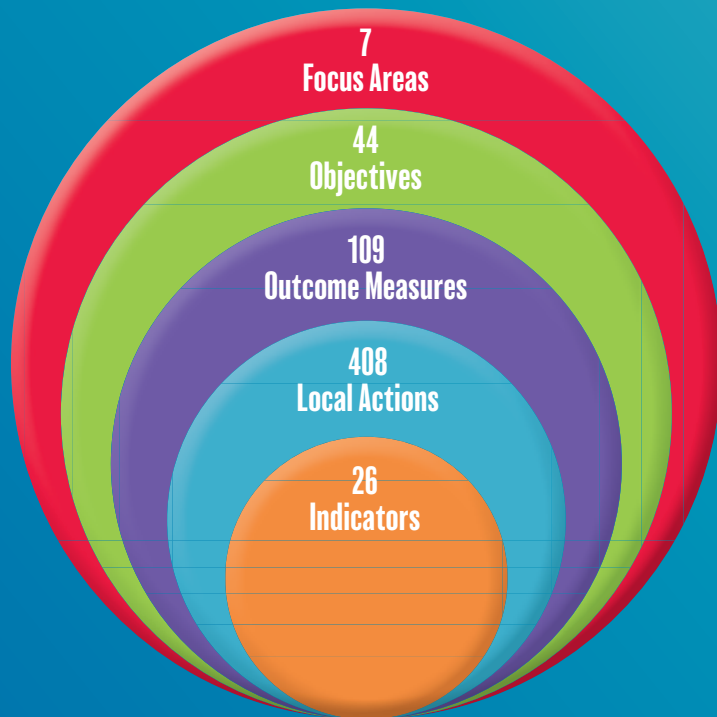


7. USE OF SUSTAINABILITY Tools for Assessing & Rating Communities ("STAR")



Given the County's commitment to sustainability principles in its MCAP, Comprehensive Plan and other policies and procedures, the Team used the third party rating system of STAR as part of this planning process.²³ GreenKeys! incorporates the results of the STAR assessment performed for the County as part of the overall GreenKeys! project.

A. Overview of the System

STAR is the first national third-party certification program that recognizes sustainable communities for their efforts. STAR is both a framework and a certification program. Originally released in October 2012, STAR is intended to provide communities with a method for identifying, validating, and supporting the implementation of best practices that improve sustainable community conditions.

STAR provides local leaders with a framework for assessing their community's sustainability, setting targets for moving forward, and measuring progress along the way. STAR consists of seven (7) main goal areas broken down to assist local governments and their communities in more effectively strategizing and defining their sustainability planning

TABLE 5. STAR Community Rating System Goal Area Matrix²⁴

BUILT ENVIRONMENT	CLIMATE & ENERGY	ECONOMY & JOBS	EDUCATION, ARTS & COMMUNITY	EQUITY & EMPOWERMENT	HEALTH & SAFETY	NATURAL SYSTEMS
Ambient Light & Noise	Climate Adaptation	Business Retention & Development	Arts & Culture	Civic Engagement	Active Living	Green Infrastructure
Community Water Systems	Greenhouse Gas Mitigation	Green Market Development	Community Cohesion	Civil & Human Rights	Community Health & Health Systems	Invasive Species
Compact & Complete Communities	Greening the Energy Supply	Local Economy	Educational Opportunity & Attainment	Environmental Justice	Emergency Prevention & Response	Natural Resource Protection
Housing Affordability	Industrial Sector Resource Efficiency	Quality Jobs & Living Wages	Historic Preservation	Equitable Services & Access	Food Access & Nutrition	Outdoor Air Quality
Infill & Redevelopment	Resource Efficient Buildings	Targeted Industry Development	Social & Cultural Diversity	Human Services	Indoor Air Quality	Water in the Environment
Public Spaces	Resource Efficient Public Infrastructure	Workforce Readiness		Poverty & Alleviation	Natural & Human Hazards	Working Lands
Transportation Choices	Waste Minimization				Safe Communities	

efforts. STAR’s goal areas and objectives are provided above in Table 5.

Conducting a preliminary assessment in the rating system results in a preliminary rating score, ranging from 0 to the maximum 720 points achievable under STAR. Reporting STAR Communities, like Monroe County, undergo a more substantive assessment involving the compilation and electronic reporting of data. This data collection and submission results in formal STAR certification with review of submitted data by STAR technical staff.

B. Monroe County’s Reporting STAR Community Assessment

Beginning in October 2014, Monroe County conducted an assessment of current policies, practices and services initiated and implemented by the County using the STAR framework. This assessment was conducted in order to pursue formal



certification from STAR at the conclusion of all data collection and reporting activities. Over the course of nine (9) months, research was conducted to identify Monroe County initiatives in each of the seven (7) STAR goal areas. An eighth bonus goal area (Innovation & Process) was also evaluated to determine if Monroe County could score additional points for innovative efforts being undertaken by the County. Note that in instances where the County was affiliated with, supportive of or otherwise involved in programs, services and planning initiatives conducted by other entities at a regional scale, the County was credited for that participation. This is consistent with the STAR guidance and ensures that initiatives outside of the County's formal jurisdiction are credited to the County when participation is active.

All of the identified initiatives were entered into the STAR Crosswalk Excel spreadsheet and subsequently the online reporting tool. All data entered

STAR COMMUNITIES RESPONSIBILITY TOOLS FOR ASSESSING & RATING COMMUNITIES

Membership
Became a STAR Member Community.
3 levels of membership:
1. **Participating**- Self reporting.
2. **Reporting**- Certification/verification and
3. **Leadership**- Certification/verification with bells and whistles).

Evaluation
Crosswalk- spreadsheet consisting of 749 rows and 2,247 cells for entering data. Additional development of 749 narratives for actions.
Online Reporting Tool- conversion of all data into reporting tool – over 2,000 individual entry cells.

Certification/Verification
Submitted data in spreadsheet and online reporting tool for scoring. Verification- staff of the STAR organization then verify all information. Resubmittal for certain credits then occurs based on initial verification.

Monroe County, FL

PHOTO SOURCE: GreenKeys! Project Team

Nuisance Flooding

PHOTO SOURCE: Greenkeys! Project Team



Once certified, an official STAR score lasts three (3) years. There are four (4) certification rating levels under STAR:

- 5-STAR Community (achieving 600-720 points)
- 4-STAR Community (achieving 400-599 points)
- 3-STAR Community (achieving 200-399 points)
- Reporting STAR Community (achieving <200 points)

into the online reporting tool was used in the formal STAR certification process discussed in the following section. The STAR Crosswalk Excel spreadsheet illustrating the results of Monroe County's assessment is provided in Appendix F.

C. Certification & Scoring

On April 2, 2015, all data collection and entry for Monroe County was completed and submitted for formal STAR certification. Preliminary verification of the submitted data was provided by STAR staff on May 28, 2015, identifying several actions and outcomes requiring clarification and/or additional data submission. After revising the STAR submission and providing all additionally requested information, final certification was requested. Monroe County was certified as a **3-STAR Community** on June 24, 2015, receiving a final score of 261.3. The County's certified STAR score is broken down in Table 6 to the right.

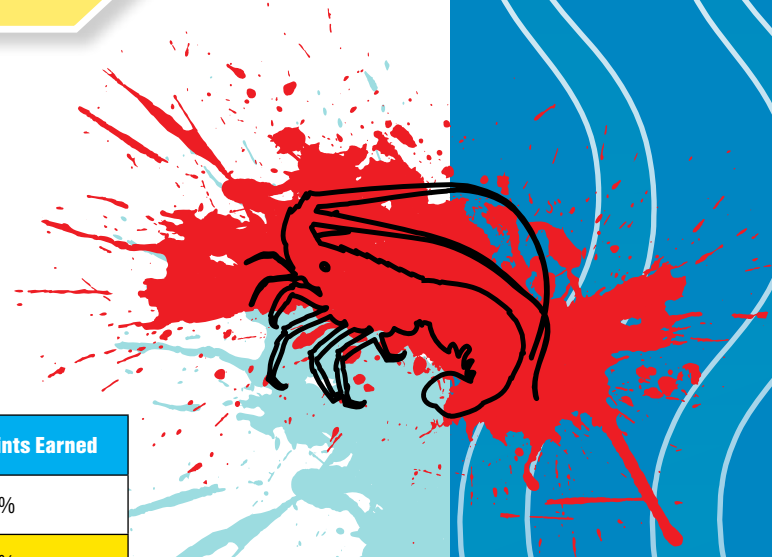
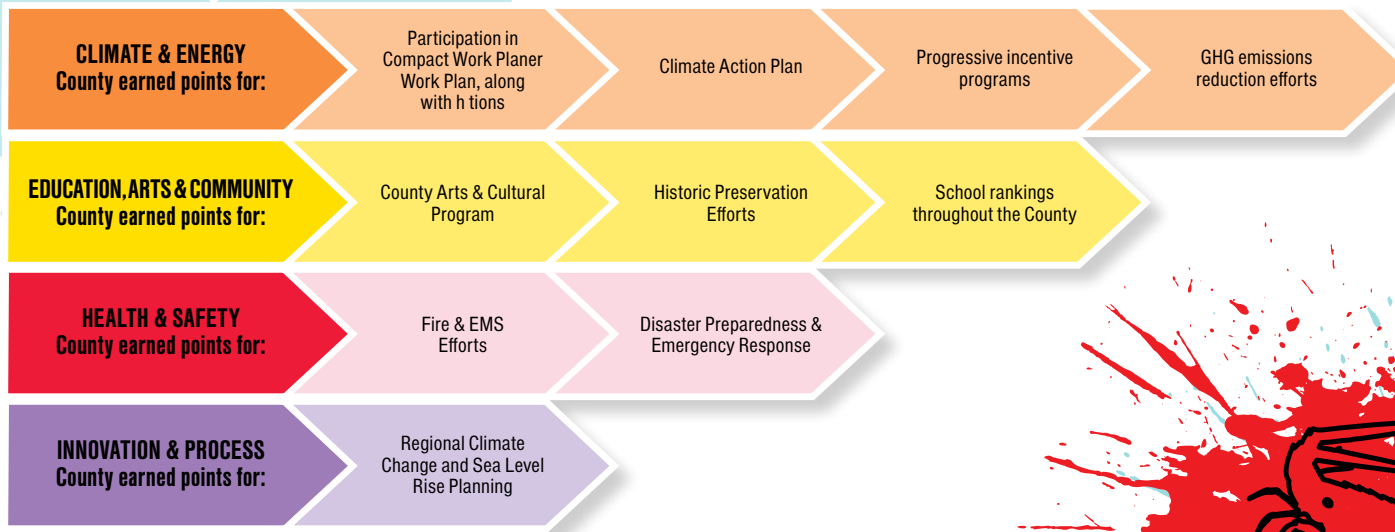
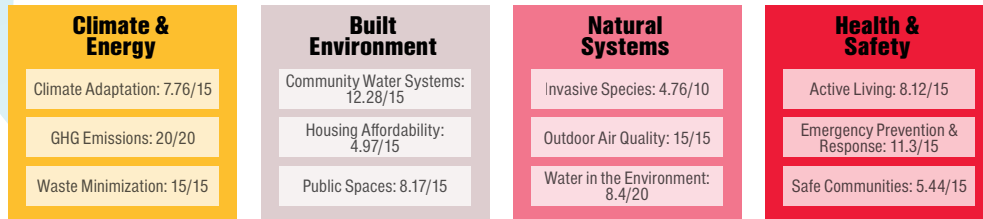


TABLE 6. STAR Assessment Points Breakdown

Goal Area	Points Scored	Points Available	% of Total Points Earned
Built Environment	33.2	100	33.2%
Climate & Energy	52.6	100	52.6%
Economy & Jobs	36.3	100	36.3%
Education, Arts & Community	31.5	70	45.0%
Equity & Empowerment	20.0	100	20.0%
Health & Safety	42.9	100	42.9%
Natural Systems	39.9	100	39.9%
Innovation & Process Credits	5.0	50	10.0%
FINAL SCORE	261.3	720	36.2%

The point breakdowns for the four (4) goal areas of greatest interest to the County (Climate & Energy, Built Environment, Natural Systems, and Health & Safety) are depicted in the graphic below. These areas translate into the highest priority areas in GreenKeys!. The three (3) highest scoring subgoals within each goal area are also highlighted.



Monroe County, FL

PHOTO SOURCE: GreenKeys! Project Team



D. How Monroe County's Score Compares to Other Certified STAR Communities

Fifty (50) communities across the U.S. have completed the STAR evaluation process with another fifty-seven (57) currently undertaking it. The results of those that have been certified are depicted to the right.

In Florida:

- Three (3) other communities have been certified (Broward County achieved a 4-STAR rating and Palm Bay and Lee County each achieved a 3-STAR rating);
- Five (5) communities are “reporting,” meaning that they are in the certification process presently (Sarasota County, City of West Palm Beach, City of St. Petersburg, City of Marathon and the City of Pinecrest);
- Four (4) communities are “participating” meaning they have joined as a member and completed the Crosswalk (this includes the Village of Islamorada, Bonita Springs, Coral Gables and the City of Hollywood), but not the verification/certification process;
- Monroe County is the most recently completed certification; and
- Thirteen (13) total communities in Florida are involved in STAR.

In addition to national and Florida comparisons, the table to the right demonstrates similarities of communities with similar populations.

E. Future Use of STAR and Key Areas for Improvement

Given the comprehensive nature of STAR across all seven (7) goal areas that span from economic development to social values, there are many



Albany, NY; Atlanta, GA; Beaverton, OR; Birmingham, AL; Blue Island, IL; Chandler, AZ; Charles City, IA; Cleveland, OH; Des Moines, IA; El Cerrito, CA; Fayetteville, AR; Fort Collins, CO; Houston, TX; Indianapolis, IN; Las Cruces, NM; Lee County, FL; **Monroe County, FL**; Palm Bay, FL; Park Forest, IL; Phoenix, AZ; Reading, PA; Riverside, CA; Rosemount, MN; San Antonio, TX; St. Louis, MO; Wichita, KS & Woodbridge Township, NJ

200-399 Points
★ ★ ★



Austin, TX; Boise, ID; Broward County, FL; Burlington, VT; Columbus, OH; Davenport, IA; Dubuque, IA; Evanston, IL; Henderson, NV; Iowa City, IA; Las Vegas, NV; Louisville, KY; Memphis-Shelby County, TN; Plano, TX; Portland, OR; Raleigh, NC; Tacoma, WA; Tucson, AZ & Washington, DC

400-599 Points
★ ★ ★ ★



Baltimore, MD; Cambridge, MA; Northampton, MA & Seattle, WA

600 + Points
★ ★ ★ ★ ★

TABLE 7. National and Statewide STAR Community Comparison

Community	Population	Score	Date of Certification
Albany, NY	97,000	215.2	6/1/2014
Woodbridge Township, NJ	99,585	219.5	2/2/2015
Palm Bay, FL	106,714	222.6	5/11/2015
Reading, PA	87,893	234.1	5/4/2015
Fayetteville, AR	75,000	271.9	8/10/2014

uses for this information beyond just this planning process. It can be used as a roadmap, as a planning tool, as a way to organize/guide public engagement processes, to aid in decision-making and as a measuring stick to determine whether investments are achieving outcomes. Communities have used STAR for strategic planning purposes as well as comprehensive planning purposes.

Monroe County has chosen to evaluate all seven (7) STAR goal areas for the prioritization of future efforts. Specific focus will be placed on four (4) of these in this planning process, including Climate & Energy, Built Environment, Natural Systems and Health & Safety (which are also Focus Areas for GreenKeys!)." Given the nature and overlap of the remaining Equity & Empowerment, Economy & Jobs, and Education, Arts & Community goal areas, GreenKeys! consolidates these into one (1) Focus Area. In addition to the STAR goal areas, the Team also added a sixth Government Operations Focus Area for evaluation and prioritization in GreenKeys!. After completion of the STAR assessment, County staff and the Team prioritized the remaining local actions and outcome level measures that seemed most applicable and practical to the County and in the greatest alignment with future County goals for increasing overall sustainability. Only those local actions and outcome level measures most applicable to Monroe County were prioritized and are depicted below as recommendations in this planning process.

These recommendations reflect local actions and/or outcome level measures within the STAR framework that have yet to be implemented by the County. Since GreenKeys! focuses on sustainability, sea level rise vulnerability and climate issues, this

Nuisance Flooding in Key Largo, FL

PHOTO SOURCE: Rhonda Haag



Nuisance Flooding in Key Largo, FL

PHOTO SOURCE: GreenKeys! Project Team

includes the concept of “resiliency.” Resiliency is well integrated into STAR because, at its core, resilience means that a community has the resources and infrastructure in place to sustain its environment, economy, and people, regardless of shifting conditions or unforeseen events.

F. Integration with Plan Performance Tracking

Within the STAR framework, each of the forty-four (44) Objectives contains two (2) types of evaluation measures:

➔ **Community Level Outcomes:** more quantitative, measurable, condition-level indicators that show community progress on a STAR Community Rating System Objective. Examples: reductions in energy use or increased transportation access.

➔ **Local Actions:** more qualitative action government takes to move toward the Community Level Outcomes – the range of decisions, investments, programs, plans, and codes that a local community puts in place. Actions focus on deliverables that move towards Outcomes, and can be done by both the local government and other community groups and partners. Examples: land development regulations, ordinances, plans, assessments, and education and outreach activities.

Because of the qualitative nature of STAR and the multi-disciplinary input into its development, STAR has served as a sound basis for developing recommendations in this planning process. The STAR framework provides a robust metric of outcomes and actions that local governments can use to evaluate current and previous planning initiatives. It can also be used to track performance for the planning process. Outcome level measures provide quanti-

tative measures for determining the effectiveness of initiative implementation. Additionally, the suite of local actions within the STAR framework provides ideas local governments can use in implementing new initiatives to achieve desired outcome level measures.

In addition to guiding recommendations in GreenKeys!, the STAR framework can also be used in future planning and update processes. There is significant overlap between the goal areas within the STAR framework and recommended Comprehensive Plan principles created by the American Planning Association (“APA”) as part of its Sustaining Places initiative.²⁵ APA’s recommended Comprehensive Plan principles include: 1) Livable Built Environment, 2) Harmony with Nature, 3) Resilient Economy, 4) Interwoven Equity, 5) Healthy Community, and 6) Responsible Regionalism. STAR’s objectives follow these principles.

BALTIMORE, MARYLAND STAR CASE STUDY ON INTEGRATION

The City of Baltimore (“City”) faces a wide range of natural hazards like flooding, coastal storms and extreme heat. In 2013, the City prepared a Disaster Preparedness Project and Plan (“DP3”), combining hazard mitigation and climate adaptation into a single plan. Their DP3 included an innovative flood vulnerability assessment showing the estimated flooding, sea level rise and coastal storm influence of climate change, coastal hazards assessment showing how urban forests, parks and green space provide a storm buffer and heat vulnerability assessment identifying urban heat islands and hot spots.

The City is currently in the implementation phase, taking actions to strengthen their resilience based on the results of the DP3. High priority actions include:

- New floodplain regulations more stringent than FEMA;
- Growing Green Initiative which uses vacant lots for stormwater management and coastal buffering;
- Installation of 200 Urban Heat Island Sensors in hot spot communities where over thirty (30) tree plantings have been conducted;
- Integration of resilience considerations into the City’s Capital Improvements Process;
- Citizen and business education about emergency preparedness and the impacts of climate change; and
- Development of a tree database that considers climate change impacts and identifies which tree species are best to plant in specific areas to help mitigate the impacts.

The City’s climate adaptation efforts and current implementation strategy helped contribute to the 5-STAR rating obtained by the City of Baltimore in April 2015 (one of only three 5-STAR Communities in the U.S.).

Monroe County, FL

PHOTO SOURCE: GreenKeys! Project Team

