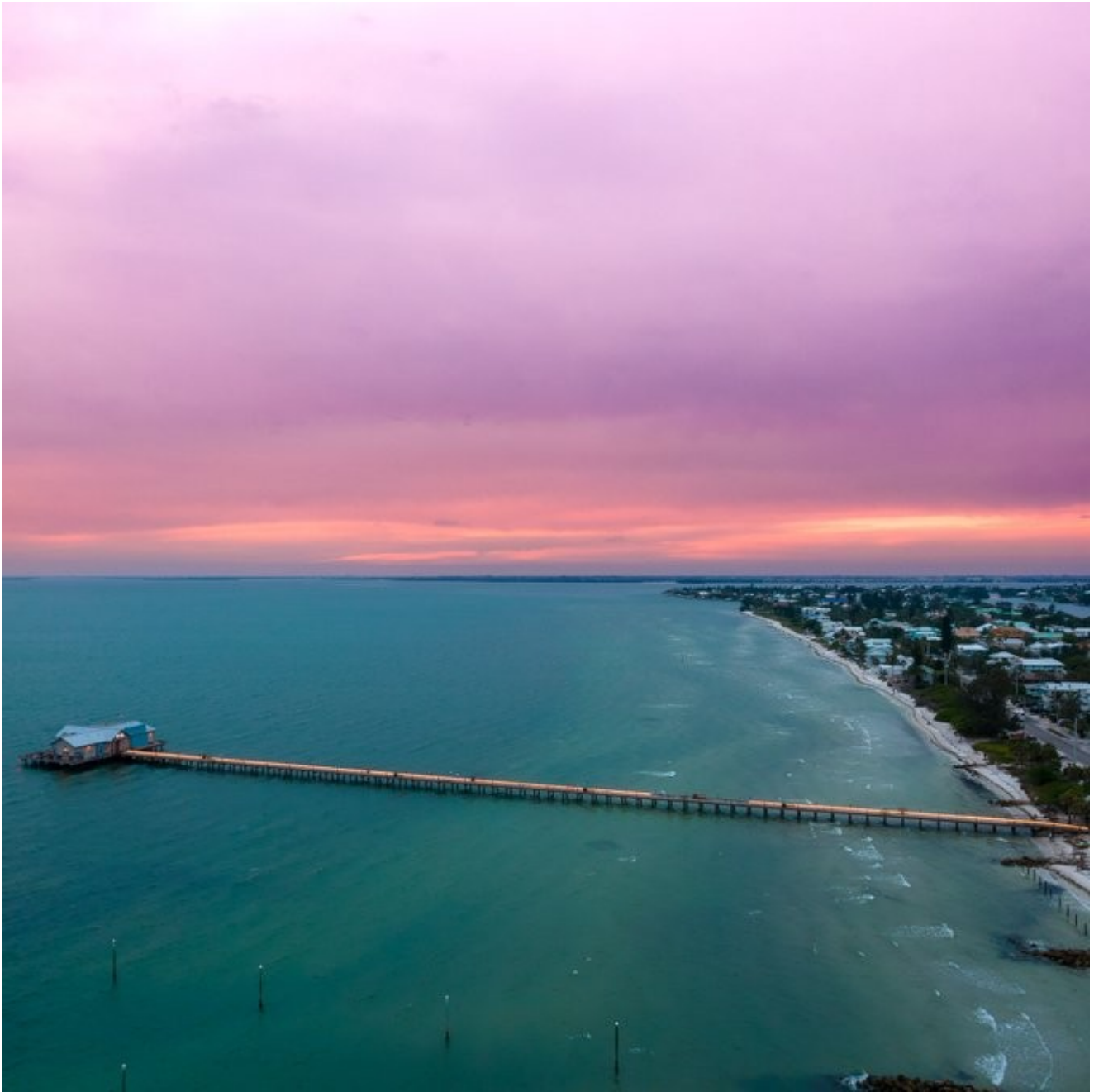


# Remain Committed to Water Quality When Advocating

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Water Quality should remain in focus for everyone in Sarasota County, and it is a focus for most governments. While workforce housing and affordable housing is crucial, our economic survival and quality of life depends on clean water.

The good news is there are firm solutions and plans in place for water quality. There are specific projects happening now, and as funding becomes available, there are specific shovel-ready projects that are ready to move forward, with more in the pipeline. These projects will lead to significant progress in water quality.

The Argus Foundation was a proud part of the Steering Committee of Gulf Coast Community Foundation's Water Quality Playbook through our Water Quality Subcommittee Co-Chair and sustainable farmer Alan Jones. This playbook offers specific activities and specific

solutions, which are being implemented today.

Conversely, there is a universal cry for affordable housing in the community, a problem that Argus has been warning about becoming a crisis since 2016, but few shovel-ready specific projects to choose from.

Government continues to listen and allocate funding, but the lack of actual projects to apply the funding to is a problem that government cannot solve on its own. We can complain all we want, but if we don't offer specific long-term plans and solutions from the private and non-profit sector, we are shouting into the wind. Just asking for more funding is not a solution or plan.

The good news is when offered specific solutions to help affordable housing, the County Commission and County Administration have acted and implemented those solutions when they receive them. Examples include implementing half dwelling units, reducing parking requirements, reducing rates for mobility fees for smaller units, taking surplus lands and offering them to the private sector specifically to create affordable housing. Most of the solutions offered in a 2017 situational report from a county government affordable housing advisory committee have been implemented either through the government or through the free market.

But while the struggle for affordable housing is a very real current crisis, and very much affects every business, the community advocating taking money from water quality is not the answer. It is short sighted to take our eyes off of water quality because we currently don't have a red tide crisis sitting on our shores. Water Quality projects that are in the pipeline and partially funded should be completed as opposed to putting money into a pot to sit while we figure out what else we can do to encourage affordable housing in the free market.

The Argus Foundation remains committed to water quality and we are doing our part to offer cost-effective solutions. In the meantime, we will also work to bring specific solutions addressing the affordable housing crisis, but we do not believe advocating holding money from water quality projects while we figure out what to do about affordable housing is the answer. Our community should remain committed to water quality and finding solutions to affordable housing, but not at the expense of funding water quality.

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