

We Like Mike Hutchinson

Control Growth Now's **2025 Citizen of the Year** is east County activist Mike Hutchinson.

In 2020, Mike very narrowly lost a Republican primary for County Commission to incumbent Mike Moran, by only 368 votes, less than a 3% margin.

He continued fighting for the public interest, however, as he has for the past ten years, as a leader of "Keep the Country ... Country," an organization dedicated to constraining urban sprawl in east Sarasota County.

He also has sought reform in his party as an active member of the Sarasota County Republican Executive Committee.

Mike Hutchinson is a graduate of Virginia Tech and worked for the Department of Defense as a computer programmer early in his career. Mike came to Sarasota in 1973 to work for EMR Telemetry where he started as a software engineer but also worked as a project manager and supervised various engineering groups. In 1996 Mike went to work for Harris Controls in Melbourne, FL, where he worked on software for monitoring large power grids. In 1999, Mike returned to Sarasota to work at L-3 Communications on "black box" recorders.

Mike Hutchinson retired in 2007 and has spent his time volunteering in our community.

Mike joined the Sarasota Technology Users Group (STUG) soon after retiring. From this network, Mike started volunteering on the PC Refurbishing Project

(PCRP) in 2008. The PCRP restores donated used computers for use by students or adults who can't afford to buy one. In January 2009 Mike became a STUG Director. Mike was President of STUG from 2011 until 2015. He continues as a director and is now the team leader of the Refurbishing Project. Since 2014 the PCRP has donated over 1,000 computers a year to the community, over 23,000 since inception. Starting in 2018, the project started a program called Komputer for Kids which supplies refurbished computers to schools for use by disadvantaged students.



In addition to volunteering his time on providing refurbished computers to disadvantaged children, Mike has volunteered his time with the Bern Creek Improvement Association (BCIA), a homeowners' association which manages The Ranches at Bern Creek. The BCIA has opposed the government's efforts to change land use patterns in eastern Sarasota County that will harm the rural lands.

Determined to protect the Old Miakka community, in November of 2022, Mike and his wife Eileen, principals of Keep The Country Inc., sued Sarasota County over its approval of the Lakewood Ranch plan for 5,000 homes and whether the county's growth plan amendment for the development complies with state law. The developer proposed creation of a new land use designation for the property – "Village Transition Zone." This designation allows the property to be developed at more than three times the residential density that was previously permitted. The lawsuit moved to appeal in January of this year and was denied.