

Sarasota County Affordable Community Housing Update

The Board of County Commissioners has taken several strategic steps over the past few years related to Community Housing. These actions are intended to ensure that as a community we encourage diversity in housing types at affordable levels.

The Board's efforts have been in concert with a set of guiding principles as follows:

1. Community Housing is necessary to achieve a sustainable Sarasota.
2. Community Housing is recognized as necessary "community" infrastructure for economic and social sustainability.
3. The application of Smart Growth principles is the building block for community housing.
4. Economic opportunity, workforce availability, and community housing are interdependent.
5. Public, private and not-for-profit partnerships are essential to successful community housing.
6. Incentives and regulatory changes that stimulate private sector development of community housing are integral to community housing.

7. Public and private community infrastructures, such as transportation and utilities, are critical in locating and creating community housing.
8. Density, properly applied by design and location, is a viable catalyst for community housing.
9. Community housing consists of a mix of new and rehabilitated units that are diverse in design, construction, and location.

Significant operational actions have been taken based on these principles. A Community Housing Trust (CHT) has been established. The CHT is a separate, non-profit entity which will focus on five strategic areas to facilitate the provision of additional affordably priced housing stock. These five strategic areas are Business Management for Affordable Housing Resources, Convener and Catalyst for Affordable Housing Activities, Non-purchased Assets, Ownership Opportunities and Rental Opportunities.

The Board also adopted an expedited review policy for any proposed developments which have a certain number of affordable housing units included.

The County's Comprehensive Plan, which was updated in 2006, includes elements such as:

- Accommodate the production of a diversity of type and price housing through land use, zoning and Critical Area Plans to encourage a broad range of housing opportunities.

- Facilitate the production of mixed-use development comprised of residential-commercial-professional uses, through the application of appropriate development standards, design flexibility and compatibility review and regulatory and financial incentives.
- Identify land use changes that can maximize Affordable and Workforce housing opportunities. Consider appropriate sites for higher densities, greater heights and infill development along transportation corridors.
- Collaborate with nonprofit organizations, private developers, employers, special needs groups, State and Federal agencies, and other interested parties to develop market-based Community housing.

Many of these efforts have involved local, state and federal funds. Recently, the Board dedicated \$23 million from the sale of lots which had reverted back to the County (escheated lots) to further advance the community's interest in community housing.

Updated: March 1, 2007