



ATTAINABLE HOUSING

Preserving, Creating, and Diversifying
Affordable and Workforce Housing

STRATEGIC PLAN



SEMINOLE COUNTY
COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT
DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT
NOVEMBER 2020

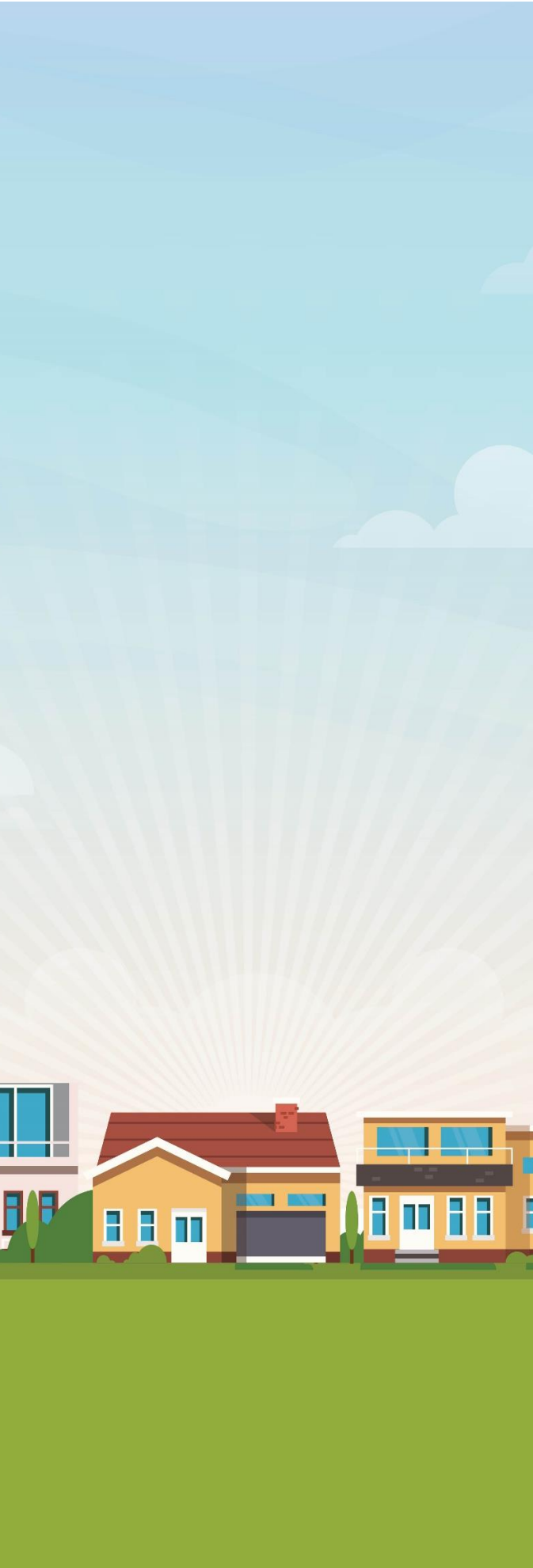


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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Seminole County along with the rest of the nation, is facing a growing affordable housing shortage as a result of legislative policy decisions, market forces, and shifting demographics. Home prices are rising at twice the rate of wage growth, and according to US Census data, have risen faster than inflation. In 1980, the typical home sold for about \$197,500, adjusted for inflation; today that same average home sells for more than \$325,000. Research from the advocacy group Home1, indicates that 11 million Americans spend more than half their paycheck on rent, and the National Low Income Housing Coalition found that a renter working 40 hours a week and earning minimum wage can afford a two bedroom apartment without being cost burdened “in exactly zero (0) counties nationwide” (Source: www.curbed.com: *The Affordable Housing Crisis Explained* by Patrick Sisson, Jeff Andrews, and Alex Bazeley). This lack of affordable housing leads to community instability and in some cases homelessness.

In an effort to address the affordable housing crisis, Seminole County participated in a Regional Affordable Housing Initiative with Orange County, Osceola County, and the City of Orlando. This two year regional effort concluded that there is no one solution to this crisis and that many approaches with multiple policies and programs will be necessary to advance an effective affordable housing agenda.

The provision of sufficient attainable housing is a complex, multifaceted issue that impacts the entire community in various ways. Seminole County recognizes that an actionable strategic plan is needed to help address this issue.

“Stable Affordable Housing is Central to the Health of Individuals, Families and Communities.”

— ChangeLab Solutions



“Current housing production across the region is well below levels needed to support population growth.”

— Regional Affordable Housing Initiative Executive Summary Report



“Access to decent, affordable housing provides critical stability for families, and lowers the risk that vulnerable families become homeless.”












- Enterprise- Impacts of Affordable Housing on Families and Communities



Executive Summary

ACTION PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS






Short Term (1-3 Years)

-  **Utilize Shimberg's Access and Opportunity Model-** Identify areas within the County that are most appropriate for affordable housing based on the model's criteria; direct efforts with respect to Community Land Trusts, Land Banking, and Pilot Projects to those identified areas.
-  **Adopt a Community Land Trust Ordinance-** Partner with community land trust organizations for development of suitable surplus County lands as affordable housing.
-  **Establish an Affordable Housing Trust Fund-** Create a local dedicated funding source to assist in underwriting the cost of developing affordable housing. A trust fund could be used for incentives; impact fee subsidies; and/or repairs and maintenance of existing subsidized units.
-  **Permit Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) in all Single-Family Residential Zoning Districts and establish Impact Fee Rates Specific to ADUs-** Adopt amendments to the Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Code to allow ADUs as one method of responding to the need for affordable housing for smaller, single-parent, and aging households.
-  **Incentives-** Establish an incentive program to 1.) Reduce, subsidize, or waive impact fees for affordable and workforce units; 2.) Leverage incentives such as expedited permitting, reduced parking requirements, and tax incentives; and 3.) Foster the creation and preservation of units.
-  **Remove Regulatory Barriers/Promote Missing Middle Housing Types-** Update existing affordable housing policies within the Seminole County Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Code in a manner that encourages a diversity of housing types and mixed-income housing.
-  **Preservation-** Extend required housing affordability periods and create first right of refusal/first right of sale contract language for units receiving County funds.
-  **Inclusionary Housing-** Explore the adoption of Inclusionary Housing/Zoning policies applicable to certain areas of the County where most appropriate for affordable and workforce housing.
-  **Engage, Educate and Inform** – Engage stakeholder groups and create marketing and education tools including a webpage and informational documents such as brochures and pamphlets that outline all incentives, regulatory tools, and programs the County offers to encourage the development and preservation of attainable housing. Combat NIMBYism (Not in My Backyard) negative perceptions of affordable and workforce housing through education and community outreach.
-  **Create an Attainable Housing Program Manager Position** – Hire the budgeted Program Manager position within the Community Services Department to manage the Attainable Housing Program put forth by this Strategic Plan.
-  **Locate and Preserve Attainable Housing near Transit and Multimodal Transportation Options** – Utilize the Access and Opportunity Model and other GIS tools to determine the best locations near transit and multiple modes of transportation for attainable housing.



Executive Summary





Long Term: (4-10 Years)

-  **Land Banking** - Establish a Land Banking Program by identifying appropriate County-owned properties; directly purchasing suitable property; and/or foreclosing on problem properties. Offer those lands at low cost to developers to build affordable and workforce housing.
-  **Leveraging County Development Rights** - Transfer of Development Rights from County owned undevelopable property to affordable housing development projects. Explore private/public partnerships to integrate live-work units within County owned buildings.
-  **Pilot Projects** - Explore pilot projects whereby the County develops attainable housing on County owned land through private/public partnerships.
-  **Purchase Assistance Program** - Research and pursue a locally funded purchase assistance program for “Essential Service Personnel”, including County employees, and Public Safety professionals.
-  **Improve Access to Transit to Increase Housing Affordability** – Improve the availability of and connection to high frequency and regional express bus routes.



FUNDING RECOMMENDATIONS

Financial Resource and General Fund Budget Needs:

Short Term (1-3 Years)




-  **\$500k- Affordable Housing Trust Fund-** Fund the new affordable housing trust fund annually with \$500,000 from the General Fund to pay a percentage of impact fees, subsidize units with expiring affordability requirements, and fund maintenance and repair of affordable units.
-  **\$100k- Direct revenues from certain program fees to Affordable Housing Trust Fund-** For example, direct revenues from the Foreclosure Registry and Vacation Rental Registry.
-  **\$50k FY 20/21 Nexus Study-** Participate with Orange County in a region-wide Nexus Study for Linkage Fees.
-  **\$80k FY 20/21 Attainable Housing Program Manager-** Fiscal Year 20/21 Budget includes \$80k for salary and benefits for a new program manager in the Community Services Department.

Long Term (4-10 Years)

-  **Fund Affordable Housing Trust Fund-** Based on determined need and utilization of the Affordable Housing Trust Fund within the Short Term Implementation Phase, inject the appropriate amount of new capital each budget year to provide continued support to programs and services.
-  **Adopt Linkage Fee-** Based on results of the Nexus Study, consider adoption of a Linkage Fee to create new financial resources to support affordable housing.



Executive Summary

-  **Purchase Assistance Program-** Determine a needed funding amount and adopt a budget for a Purchase Assistance Program.
-  **Dedicate other Program Fees-** Identify other program revenues to be allocated to the Affordable Housing Trust Fund.
-  **Explore Additional Funding Opportunities for Transit –** Leverage Federal and State Grant opportunities and identify other potential revenue sources.



ATTAINABLE HOUSING CHALLENGES

Cost Burdened Households

Affordable housing is that in which the occupant(s) is/are paying no more than 30% of his/her income for gross housing costs, including utilities (*Source: 2018 Regional Affordable Housing Initiative*). Households spending more than that are considered “cost burdened”.

The Regional Initiative found that, of Seminole County’s 167,549 households, 44,750, were cost burdened.

High Number of Cost Burden Households:

- 89% of households with income under \$20,000
- 73% of households with income \$20,000-\$34,999
- 57% of households with income \$35,000-\$49,999

Housing Stock/Inventory

- Currently there are 5,421 units in Seminole County that are required to maintain affordability through the Low-income Tax Credit (LIHTC) Program.
- From 1997 through 2012 a total of 2,225 units were released from the affordability requirement and converted to market rate rents.
- Approximately 1,500 units are at risk of conversion to market rent rates over the next five (5) years due to the 15 year “opt out” provision.

Funding Limitations

- The funding programs currently available to the County (Federal, State) are limited to households with incomes 30% to 120% of Area Median Income (AMI);
- Instability of the State Housing Initiatives Partnership Program (SHIP Funds); and
- There is no current Federal funding assistance for households at 140% of AMI. SHIP has been used in some jurisdictions, but these funds are subject to set-aside requirements.

Impacts from a Lack of Affordable Housing

- Housing instability that leads to frequent moves, negative educational outcomes, and health problems in adults and children;
- Reduced ability for individuals and families to afford critical necessities such as healthcare, education, and food;
- Economic instability by restricting labor mobility and intensifying inequality; and/or
- Increases in homelessness. (*Source: Enterprise- Impacts of Affordable Housing on Families and Communities*)



BACKGROUND

After reviewing the results of the Regional Affordable Housing Initiative and many months of workshop discussions, the Board of County Commissioners established the following priorities to help address the affordable housing crisis in Seminole County:

- Create 1) more attainable housing by increasing the housing supply to meet the needs of current and future residents; and 2) more funding resources to support and incentivize attainable housing stock;
- Diversify housing types; and
- Preserve existing affordable housing stock.

Affordable Housing is defined by the Seminole County Comprehensive Plan as, “A Dwelling Unit for which monthly rents or monthly mortgage payments, including taxes, insurance, and utilities, do not exceed 30 percent of that amount which represents the percentage of the median adjusted gross annual income for households or persons indicated in Section 420.0004, Florida Statutes (i.e. Low income, moderate income, and very low income households or persons defined herein). Affordable housing definitions that are prescribed by housing programs administered by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development or the State of Florida may also be used by Seminole County when implementing such programs”.

Workforce Housing is defined by the Seminole County Comprehensive Plan as, “Housing affordable to Seminole County working households that earn up to 140 percent of the Area Median Income (AMI). Seminole County further defines Workforce Housing to include households in which one or more of the wage-earners, employed by either the private or the public sector, are compensated for provision of services essential to Seminole County, including but not limited to: teachers and educators, police and fire personnel, government employees, healthcare personnel, and skilled building trade’s personnel”.

Area Median Income (AMI) is the household income for the median or middle household in a region. Seminole County is part of the Orlando-Kissimmee-Sanford metropolitan statistical area (MSA). The Area Median Income for the Orlando-Kissimmee-Sanford MSA is \$65,100. The median household income for Seminole County is \$67,470.

Affordable housing definitions typically do not include the transportation costs associated connecting housing to jobs, education and other services. True housing affordability is related to the cost of housing and the cost of transportation from that location.

After housing, transportation costs are the highest monthly expense for most households. On average, housing plus transportation costs make up approximately half of U.S. household budgets. In order to measure impact of transportation on affordable housing the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) partnered with the Center for Neighborhood Technology (CNT) to develop the H+T (Housing plus Transportation) Index. This



indicator measures the percentage of income the average household spends on housing and transportation combined. The H+T Index for Seminole County is 61%. The CNT sets the benchmark at no more than 45% of household income (<https://htaindex.cnt.org/>).

Former HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan said, “For any housing community to succeed, its residents need to be able to get to work, its young people need to be able to get to school, and its families need to be able to access critical resources and services they need”. HUD’s Guidebook for Creating Connected Communities notes that households in auto-dependent neighborhoods spend about 25% of their income on transportation costs, but this number reduces to 9% in neighborhoods with a variety of mobility options.

Some of these options are identified in Central Florida’s Regional Transportation Authority, (LYNX) transit network plan known as LYNX Forward. This 2018 plan identifies five tiers of mobility options, including a high frequency core transit network and frequent regional express services. The high frequency service consists of routes operating along regional commercial corridors providing high quality, fast and convenient transit service with headways of 20 to 10 minutes. Regional express service provides a fast and direct trip across the region between regional activity centers and high employment centers.

The County acknowledges there is a need to have a strategic plan that speaks to various housing needs, but places emphasis on providing services to households and individuals with modest financial means. The County also seeks to examine ways to incorporate private investment and initiatives to assist workforce housing needs for the service sector. The following Action Plan recommendations strive to create, diversify and preserve affordable and workforce housing, as defined above, so that housing is attainable for current and future Seminole County residents. Attainable housing is the adequate supply of housing at all price points for all income levels.



ACTION PLAN

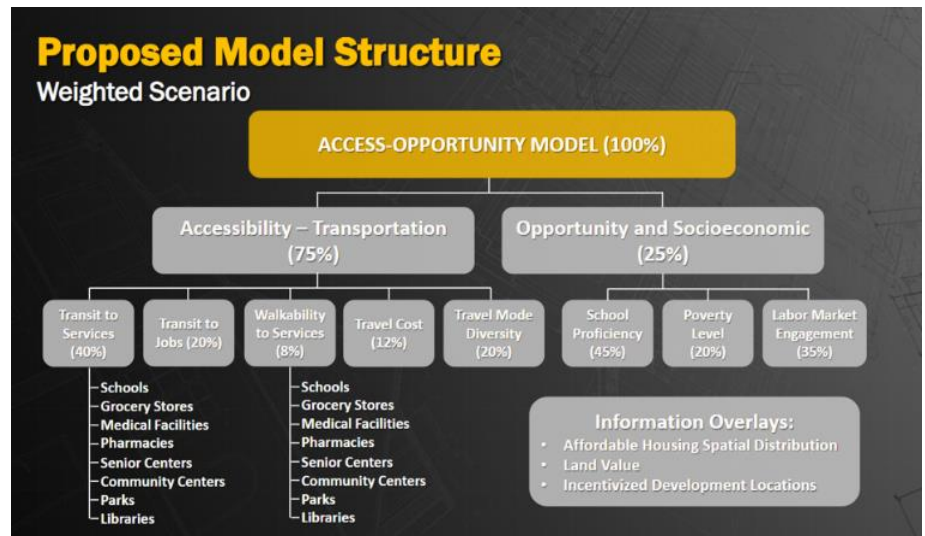
Based on the goals established by the Board of County Commissioners (BCC), to Create, Diversify, and Preserve attainable housing, staff has developed the following Action Plan. The Action Plan contemplates two phases, a Short Term Implementation Plan and a Long Term Implementation Plan.

Short Term (1- 3 Years) Implementation Plan

- **Utilize Shimberg's GIS Access and Opportunity Model**

In conjunction with the Regional Affordable Housing initiative, the Shimberg Center for Housing Studies at the University of Florida developed an Access and Opportunity Geographic Information System (GIS) model. This computer program helps to identify areas suitable for the development of affordable housing. The model identifies areas that are conducive to

affordable housing development by using transportation accessibility and socioeconomic opportunity factors. For example, an area considered for affordable housing would be evaluated for distance from transit to services, proximity of transit to jobs, walkability to services, and transportation costs. The site would also be evaluated for school proficiency, poverty level, and labor market engagement. Using the Access and Opportunity Model, the Planning Division and Community Services staff will work with County GIS staff to identify areas within unincorporated Seminole County that are most suitable for affordable housing.



- **Adopt a Community Land Trust Ordinance**

A community land trust (CLT) is a mechanism used to separate land from a house for the purpose of transferring title to the house without selling the land. It also denotes the nonprofit organization that holds title to the land and manages the ground leases on community land trust properties. Maintaining the land in a trust ensures that the housing will remain affordable permanently. (Source: Florida Housing Coalition CLT Primer, 2015).

A growing number of local governments recognize that CLTs can play an important role as stewards of community resources. Property and funds allocated to a CLT can benefit current



and future residents of Seminole County. In addition to providing construction financing and down payment assistance to buyers of CLT homes, local governments can support CLTs by providing land on which the housing can be built, as well as ongoing administrative support to the nonprofit organization. Local government support can greatly enhance both the initial and long-term affordability for its residents (*Source: Florida Housing Coalition CLT Primer, 2015*).

Seminole County Comprehensive Plan Housing Element (HSG) Policy 3.6 “County Owned Property”, supports the donation of County-owned property to a nonprofit housing organization for the construction of permanent affordable housing. Donation of appropriate surplus land to a CLT is one way in which the policy could be implemented.

The County will coordinate with the Florida Housing Coalition to help form County CLT policies and staff may seek to bring forth a Community Land Trust Ordinance to the Board of County Commissioners for consideration and adoption within the short term implementation phase of this action plan. However, it should be noted, that it is not imperative to adopt an ordinance for the County to partner with Community Land Trusts.

If the BCC chooses to adopt an Ordinance, County staff will utilize the data produced from Shimberg’s Access and Opportunity Model and coordinate with interested CLTs to identify lands within the County’s inventory that would be suitable candidates for donation.

In addition, the property located at 3500 Sanford Avenue, Sanford was acquired using the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG). The property consists of several platted lots. A portion of the property has a structure that is vacant and non-conforming with current City of Sanford regulations. The property is being examined for feasibility for development as housing units that are both affordable in price and functional for seniors and other households with limited financial means. In order to maintain its affordability for an extended period of time, Seminole County may consider using the site as an initial property for a CLT to own and operate.

- **Establish an Affordable Housing Trust Fund**

Affordable Housing Trust Funds are used to assemble financial resources to provide incentives to housing developers, nonprofit organizations, and local governments for the preservation and development of affordable and workforce housing. Affordable Housing Trust Funds require administrative oversight to collect and distribute funds. Trust funds are amassed through dedicated funding sources such as general revenue, linkage fees, and program proceeds. (*Source: Preserving, Protecting, and Expanding Affordable Housing/A policy Toolkit for Public Health- ChangeLab Solutions*)

The County could utilize an Affordable Housing Trust Fund to subsidize units that are about to lose affordability and to underwrite impact fee payments for affordable and workforce housing units. However, please note that Chapter 163.31801(9) F.S. permits a county to



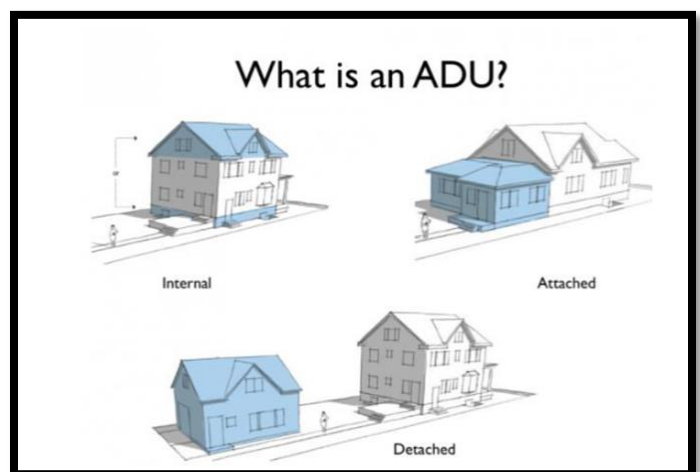
waive impact fees for the development of affordable housing as defined in Sec. 420.9071 F.S. and if a county provides such a waiver, it is not required to use any revenues to offset the impact.

- **Permit Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU) in all Single-Family Residential Zoning Districts and Establish Impact Fee Rates Specific to ADUs**

An Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU), as defined by the Seminole County Land Development Code, is a dwelling unit attached to or included within a principal dwelling unit, or located on the same lot and having an independent means of access. These units may include a full kitchen. The Florida Statutes defines an ADU as an ancillary or secondary living unit that has separate kitchen, bathroom, and sleeping areas within the same structure or on the same lot as the primary dwelling unit.

ADUs are one method of responding to the need for affordable housing for smaller, single parent, and aging households. ADUs provide a different affordable housing option for low- and middle-income renters, and extra income for homeowners in addition to the following benefits:

- Use of existing lots and subdivisions, with no need to buy land to build a large scale affordable housing development;
- Potential proximity of the existing lots to existing public services such as roads, sidewalks, and utilities already serving the lot, as well as possible proximity to jobs and public transportation;
- Allows an aging homeowner on a fixed income to rent an ADU for additional income or live in the ADU while adult children live in the principal residence thus meeting housing needs while allowing current residents to 'age in place'; and
- With effective siting standards applied, neighborhood preservation can occur by meeting housing needs without having to build large scale apartment developments nearby (following a principal called 'scatter-site housing').



Proposed ordinances amending the Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Code to permit accessory dwelling units in all single family residential zoning districts as a limited use are currently under review by the Board of County Commissioners.

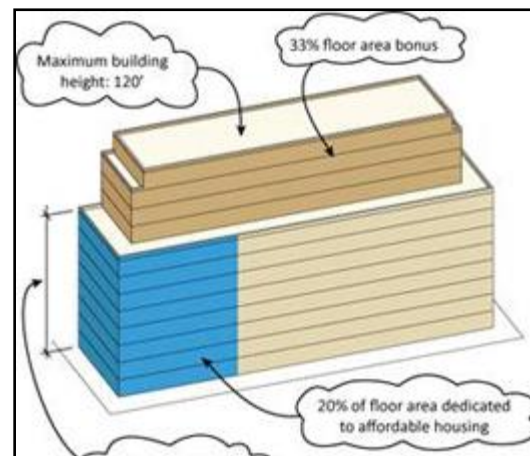


Another consideration associated with ADUs involves the assessment of impact fees. Currently, an accessory dwelling unit would be charged impact fees at the traditional single family home rate. Because of the relative scale, it is presumed that the actual impact generated by an ADU would be less than that of a single family residence; therefore, an impact fee rate specific to accessory dwelling units should be established. The County is in the process of reviewing a new transportation mobility fee, water and sewer connection fees, fire, and library impact fees. In addition, the School Board will be reviewing its impact fees within the short term implementation phase of this plan. As part of these ongoing studies, staff will evaluate a separate impact fee rate or waiving certain impact fees for ADUs. In addition, if an ADU is an affordable unit as defined in Sec. 420.9071 F.S. the County has the ability to completely waive the impact fees for such a unit.

- **Explore the adoption of Inclusionary Housing Policies**

Inclusionary housing also known as inclusionary zoning is a planning tool that requires a market rate housing developer to include a percentage of affordable and/or workforce housing within market rate development. Inclusionary housing refers to Ordinances that incentivize or mandate that a certain share of new construction be affordable by people with low to moderate incomes.

Florida Statutes Section 125.01055 enables a county to adopt and maintain any ordinance, rule, or law for the purpose of increasing the supply of affordable housing using land use mechanisms such as inclusionary housing. However, if a county adopts an inclusionary housing requirement, the county must provide, in exchange, incentives to fully offset all costs to the developer of its affordable housing contribution. Such incentives may include but not are not limited to density and intensity bonuses and reduction or waiving impact fees.



Inclusionary Housing policies can be either voluntary (incentive based) or mandatory (required for all market rate housing projects). Inclusionary housing policies can be applied county wide or to just certain areas of the County such as in areas designated as Centers and Corridors, for example, around SunRail Stations, along US Hwy 17-92 and SR 436. Seminole County will explore the adoption of an Inclusionary Housing Ordinance for certain areas of the County identified by the Access and Opportunity Model as the most suitable for affordable and workforce housing within the short term phase of this action plan.



- **Establish an Incentive Program to Reduce, Waive, or Subsidize Impact Fees - The cost that impact fees add to housing development is one of the barriers to affordability**

Embark on a study to determine the feasibility of reducing or waiving certain impact fee rates for affordable and workforce housing. In addition, explore a program to subsidize a percentage of impact fee rates that are not waived for affordable and workforce housing similar to previous County rebate program that subsidized fifty percent (50%) of the impact fees for very low income households and twenty-five percent (25%) for low income households.

Presently, there are ongoing studies for a new mobility fee, water and sewer, fire and library impact fees. In addition, the School Board will be reviewing its impact fees within the short term timeframe of this action plan. As part of these ongoing studies, staff will evaluate a separate impact fee rate for attainable housing or at the BCC's direction implement a subsidy for affordable and workforce housing to be funded by the Affordable Housing Trust Fund. For example, the subsidy percentage could be based on the type of attainable housing being provided, for example, a higher subsidy could be given to units meeting the "Affordable Housing" definition and a lower subsidy could be given to units meeting the definition of "Workforce Housing". In addition, Sec. 420.9071 F.S. permits the County to waive impact fees for affordable housing, therefore, staff will seek policy direction from the BCC on which, if any, impact fees it would support waiving entirely.

- **Update and Strengthen Existing Affordable Housing Regulations**

As an incentive to encourage affordable housing, Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Policy FLU 10.1 and Housing Policy HSG 3.3 allow up to seven (7) dwelling units/acre (du/ac) in Low Density Residential, up to twelve (12) du/ac in Medium Density, and up to 22 du/ac in High Density for affordable housing. However, these incentives are not widely utilized.

The Land Development Code currently contains provisions for affordable housing in Chapter 30 Part 16, R-AH Affordable Housing Dwelling and Chapter 30 Part 73, Alternative Density Option (ADO). In the R-AH zoning district 100% of the developed units must be available to low and moderate income households, and not less than 40% must be available for rental or purchase by low income households. The R-AH zoning district permits reduced lot sizes and authorizes the Board of County Commissioners to waive all permit and inspection fees. The ADO is not a separate zoning classification, but rather a development option meant to ensure mixed income development and prevent pockets of low-income concentration that:

- Allows a maximum density 7 du/ac; and
- Expedited development review time frames to facilitate the development process.

Neither the R-AH zoning district nor the Alternative Density Option is widely utilized throughout the County and are therefore ineffective. As part of the Land Development Code



re-write with the County's consultant, Canin Associates Inc., and staff will strengthen and improve these regulations to help encourage the development of affordable and workforce housing.

- **Adopt New Comprehensive Plan Policies and Land Development Code Regulations to Address Missing Middle Housing Types**

To respond to the need for affordable housing, the Regional Initiative reported that housing should be encouraged in multiple forms, densities, sizes, and locations. Through the Land Development Code (LDC) re-write process with the County's Consultant, staff will review and propose amendments to the LDC, and if necessary the Comprehensive Plan, to encourage a diversity of housing types such as tiny homes, cottage courts, and other missing middle housing types such as duplexes and triplexes. In addition, staff will analyze the potential of eliminating the minimum house size in certain zoning districts.

- **Affordability Periods/Preservation**

The County will extend the length of affordability periods and create "First Right of Refusal"/"First Right of Sale" contract language for units that receive local funds from Seminole County to preserve Affordable Housing.

State and Federal grants typically have timeframes in which units must house individuals who have incomes that are typically less than 80% of the area median income. Tax credit rental developments must rent to persons who generally make less than 65% of AMI. Depending on the funding source and amount of assistance, these affordability periods for multi-family rental units typically range from fifteen (15) to thirty (30) years. Some grants (HOME grants) have affordability periods that are outlined in HUD regulations. Seminole County uses restrictive use covenants that run with the property to ensure long-term affordability. The restrictive use covenants specify the income levels, and length of time the properties must be used for affordable housing. In addition, if a development receives funding from multiple sources, the funding source with the most restrictive requirements are followed.

If the County provides funds from a non-grant source, (i.e. local funding) the County can stipulate the terms of the agreement and the period of housing affordability. The County will seek longer affordability terms within its contracts. However, if affordability periods are extended, it is important to make sure there is adequate funding and staffing to provide the compliance monitoring required. Compliance monitoring is usually conducted annually to ensure the properties remain affordable.

In addition to requiring longer affordability term within its contracts, Seminole County will also include first right of refusal provisions within its agreement terms to allow Seminole County the right to consider purchasing a subsidized unit if the owner opts to stop participating in a subsidy program and sell the housing unit at market rate.



- **Engage, Educate and Inform Industry**

Staff will create a marketing and education campaign to increase awareness of affordable and workforce housing programs and incentives by creating a webpage and documents such as brochures and pamphlets that outline all incentives, regulatory tools, and programs offered to developers by the County to build workforce and affordable housing such as density bonuses, expedited permitting and tax incentives.

Staff will also engage stakeholder groups such as the Greater Orlando Builders Association (GOBA), the Apartment Association of Greater Orlando (AAGO), and the Affordable Housing Advisory Committee (AHAC) for their input and assistance with the implementing this strategic plan. The education and marketing campaign will also strive to combat NIMBYism (Not in My Backyard) negative perceptions of affordable and workforce housing through education and community outreach.

- **Create Attainable Housing Program Manager Position**

A Program Manager Position within the Community Services Department has been created to manage and monitor the new affordable housing programs and incentives. The new position will also facilitate the donation of land from the County's land inventory to Community Land Trusts and create and implement the marketing and education campaign discussed above. This position will serve as the Attainable Housing Ombudsman to facilitate affordable and workforce housing development through the County's development review processes as well serve as the liaison with stakeholder groups and the Development Services Department.

- **Locate and Preserve Attainable Housing Near Transit and Multimodal Transportation Options**

The County will utilize the Access and Opportunity Model in coordination with transit partners at LYNX, Florida Department of Transportation, and MetroPlan Orlando to assess the degree to which existing transportation networks meet the needs of low-income commuters as well as determine the best locations for attainable housing and future transit stops.

The County will prioritize the preservation of existing affordable housing within walking distance of existing and planned high frequency and regional express service routes and encourage the development of affordable housing in these neighborhoods



Long Term (4 -10 Years) Implementation Plan

- **Establish a Land Banking Program**

A governmental agency may land bank by aggregating and/or collecting parcels of land creating an inventory of low-priced land for future sale or development. A land bank can return vacant, abandoned, and tax-delinquent properties to a productive use such as affordable housing. Surplus properties within the County's existing land inventory and lands within an established Land Bank can either be developed as affordable housing, sold for development as affordable housing, or sold to generate revenue for an Affordable Housing Trust Fund.

A land bank is established by Ordinance and could be implemented by acquiring property or foreclosing on problem properties in the County to bank/reserve for affordable housing. Property that once was a problem could then be transferred to responsible ownership through the sale of land banked properties to developers through the Request for Proposal (RFP) bid process to develop affordable housing.

Land banks require dedicated and recurring funding to purchase property and for staffing to manage the program. Such funding could come from an established affordable housing trust fund.

Seminole County will establish a Land Banking program that focuses on banking properties near public schools, public transportation and employment, and in areas identified by the Shimberg Access and Opportunity Model as most suitable for affordable housing. A Land Banking Program Ordinance will be brought forward for consideration to the BCC within the long term phase of this Action Plan.

- **Air Rights (Leveraging County Development Rights)**

The County shall study and consider a program to allow the transfer of development rights (Air Rights) from undevelopable County-owned properties to suitable land for a developer to build affordable housing. The transfer of development rights would



Source: The RCLCO Foundation- Maximizing Public Sector Air Rights as an Affordable Housing Solution by C. Kat Grimsley, PhD



normally be to a parcel nearby and/or with the same land use and zoning. The County will analyze the potential to transfer Development Rights from County owned, undevelopable, property within its land inventory to affordable housing development projects. The County will also investigate opportunities for private/public partnerships and partnerships with the School District to integrate live-work units within County and/or School District owned buildings as well as explore opportunities to co-locate workforce housing units on a shared lot. The County will explore these options within the Long Term Implementation phase of this Action Plan.

- **Purchase Assistance Program**

Within the Long Term Implementation Research and pursue the establishment of a locally funded purchase assistance program to create workforce housing opportunities for public servants. There is a need to expand housing opportunities for essential service personnel who provide vital services to the community; this could include County employees, School Board employees, law enforcement, and other professionals such as fire and rescue. Workers within these classifications often have incomes that exceed the limits of the grant funded purchase assistance program, however, they may still need assistance in securing a down payment for a home. If funded and available, a purchase assistance program could be offered as a benefit to help attract and retain employees.

- **Pilot Projects**

Explore pilot projects whereby the County develops affordable housing on County-owned land through private/public partnerships to create needed units. Pilot projects could include the concept of Air Rights as discussed above.

- **Improve Access to Transit to Increase Housing Affordability**

Reduce the H+T Index and improve housing affordability by increasing connectivity to high frequency and regional express service routes by filling the last mile gap and improving bicycle and pedestrian connections to transit stops.

Facilitate coordination between Seminole County government, transit agencies (LYNX), Florida Department of Transportation, MetroPlan Orlando, public housing agencies, and nonprofit and private affordable housing developers.

Providing multiple transportation options to meet local needs and help more residents' access important destinations.



FINANCIAL PLAN

Create New Funding Resources and General Fund Budget Needs

In order to implement this Strategic Plan, and make meaningful strides in creating, protecting and diversifying affordable housing, dedicated funding sources are fundamental to this effort. Below are recommendations to create new funding sources and set budgetary priorities to implement the programs, policies, and approaches proposed for execution over the next ten years.

Short Term (1- 3 Years)

- **Finance the Affordable Housing Trust Fund-** One of the most significant investments the BCC can make is funding an Affordable Housing Trust Fund that would need to be supported by potential dedicated funding sources to include general fund revenue, linkage fees, Federal and State grant dollars, and program fees such as the foreclosure registry fees. For example, Orange County as part of its 10-Year Action Plan intends to set aside ten \$10 million dollars in general fund revenue annually over the next ten (10) years with a 10% incremental increase per year for its affordable housing trust fund.

If the BCC elects to pursue the strategies outlined in this strategic plan, staff recommends that it finances the Seminole County Affordable Housing Trust Fund with an initial infusion of \$500,000 in the General Fund revenue for the next three fiscal (3) years. This \$500,000 could fund each of the following or a portion thereof for one year:

- ➔ 50% subsidy of impact fees for approximately 172* single family residential units depending on proposed lot size; or
- ➔ 50% subsidy of impact fees for approximately 170** multi-family apartments; or
- ➔ Repairs and renovation for subsidized units;
- ➔ Rental deposit and emergency rental assistance;
- ➔ Down payment assistance for workforce and moderate income first time home buyers; or
- ➔ Inclusionary Housing Incentives.

* Assumes a lot size of less of 50' in width. **Assumes an apartment size of 850 square feet or less.

- **Perform a Commercial Linkage Fee Nexus Study-** A linkage fee is a dedicated funding source from fees assessed to commercial and office development. A commercial linkage fee, sometimes called a jobs to housing linkage fee, is charged to developers of new office and commercial development such as retail establishments, hotels and offices that create low paying employment. The fees are used to fund or subsidize the development of affordable housing. Linkage fees are usually charged on a per square foot basis. In order to adopt a linkage fee, a nexus study is required to clearly demonstrate a link



between fees and impact and show that the linkage fee directly mitigates the impact of new non-residential development (Source: *Preserving, Protecting, and Expanding Affordable Housing/A policy Toolkit for Public Health- ChangeLab Solutions*).

- **Attainable Housing Program Manager-** Budget \$80,000 in Fiscal Year 20/21 for salary and benefits for a new program manager in the Community Services Department.
- **Program Fee Revenues-** Direct revenues from certain program fees to Affordable Housing Trust Fund- For example, allocate revenues from the Foreclosure Registry, which generates approximately \$100,000 - \$125,000 annually in revenue into the Affordable Housing Trust Fund.

Long Term (4- 10 Years)

- **Fund Affordable Housing Trust Fund-** Based on utilization of the Affordable Housing Trust Fund within the Short Term Implementation Phase and analysis of need, inject the appropriate amount of new capital each budget year into the fund to support programs and services.
- **Adopt Linkage Fee-**Based on results of Nexus Study consider adoption of a Linkage Fee to create new financial resources to support affordable housing.
- **Purchase Assistance Program-** If the County desires to implement a purchase assistance program for public servants, a budget would need to be determined and adopted to support the program.
- **Dedicate Additional Program Fees into the Affordable Housing Trust Fund-** Identify other program revenues to be deposited in the Affordable Housing Trust Fund.
- **Explore additional funding opportunities for Transit-** Coordinate existing transit investments in SunRail and LYNX to leverage federal and state grant opportunities. Identify other revenue sources to improve access to transit. Explore additional revenue sources for transit.



ONGOING EFFORTS

Ongoing efforts and continued support of existing programs play an important role in the Attainable Housing Strategic Plan. Seminole County implements several programs to address housing for homeowners, renters, elderly, homeless, and others with special housing needs. The goal of each of the program is to create, stabilize, and preserve the affordable housing stock in Seminole County. It is imperative to have ongoing support for these vital programs.

- **Property Appraiser Tax Incentive Program**

In accordance with Section 196.1978, of the Florida Statutes, the Seminole County Property Appraiser offers a tax exemption for affordable housing properties. The program is available to affordable housing developments with seventy (70) or more units and the owners must have an agreement with the Florida Housing Finance Corporation recorded in public records. The agreement confirms that the development provides affordable housing to families or individuals meeting low, very-low, or extremely low income ranges. Property owners that agree to keep the units affordable for these income brackets, receive a 50% reduction in property taxes. The discount terminates if the property no longer serves as affordable housing. This program is most effective for properties that have the option to go market rate after fifteen (15) years as it provides an incentive to preserve affordable housing units. Seminole County began the program in 2018. There are a total of 14 apartment complexes currently participating in the program.

- **Identification of County Owned Properties for Affordable Housing**

Community Services and the Land Management Division coordinate regularly to review County owned parcels that become available and could possibly be used for affordable housing. Community Services and Land Management have been meeting regularly to vet these parcels for infill units. The Land Management Division is in the process of having a map created to identify potential properties for the development of affordable housing.

- **Housing Repair Programs for Homeownership**

Seminole County currently uses State and federal grants to provide home repairs to low income homeowners. In addition to meeting income eligibility, homeowners must be current on their property taxes, have a homestead exemption, and demonstrate clear ownership of the property. The repair programs seek to preserve the existing housing stock, by facilitating repairs to major systems such as air conditioning, roof replacement, plumbing, electrical systems, and accessibility for persons with disabilities. Seminole County has two other repair programs to rehabilitate houses with more extensive damage. The housing rehabilitation and reconstruction program seeks to bring houses up to current building code. Houses are



only reconstructed in cases where the damage is so severe, it is cost prohibitive to repair the unit. Homeowners must own their houses free and clear and agree to have a deferred payment mortgage with Seminole County for the cost of the reconstruction.

- **Programs for Rental Units**

Seminole County has the ability to use State and federal grants to fund renovations to existing rental units. Federal grants such as the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) is also available to non-profit organizations who own rental units. A limited amount of SHIP funds can also be used to support the renovation of rental units. The SHIP dollars can assist both non-profit and for profit entities.

- **Rental Assistance Programs**

- ➔ Seminole County uses the Home Investment Partnerships Grant (HOME) to provide tenant based rental assistance. The program provides rent subsidies to extremely low income persons and is targeted to assist the elderly, disabled, and homeless. Currently, the County's program provides assistance to 40 individuals. The HOME Tenant Based Assistance Program exists to help provide an option for relief for those on the Section 8 waiting list. Increased rents can impact this program. As rents rise, the number renters assisted decreases.
- ➔ Seminole County also receives Shelter Plus Care funds from the Continuum of Care (COC). The Shelter Plus Care Program provides housing for persons with mental health or substance abuse challenges. This program is currently at capacity, and served 53 individuals last year. Increasing rents impact this program. As rents rise, the number of renters assisted decreases.
- ➔ Seminole County coordinates with the Seminole County Housing Authority whenever possible for tenant referrals when openings become available for Housing Choice Vouchers.
- ➔ The County also uses State and federal funds to provide rapid re-housing assistance to formerly homeless families. In addition to an internal program administered by the Community Services Department, Seminole County partners with Embracing Families to provide rapid- rehousing services and case management.

- **Addressing Homelessness**

Seminole County works diligently to address the needs of homeless and precariously housed individuals and families. While homelessness isn't the primary focus of this report, it is a significant associated issue that the County has been working aggressively to address for



several years. Seminole County currently funds or directly implements the following Homeless Programs:

- ➔ SHIP Rapid Re-Housing (RRH) provides rental subsidy/moving expenses through Embrace Families;
- ➔ Emergency Services Grant Rapid Re-Housing provides rental subsidy/moving expenses through Embrace Families;
- ➔ CDBG Rapid Re-Housing provides Case Management services for the SHIP RRH clients with Embrace Families;
- ➔ State ESG Rapid Re-Housing- funded by Housing Services Network to provide Case Management and rental subsidy for families;
- ➔ Continuum of Care Case Management- funded by HSN to provide Case Management for the State ESG clients;
- ➔ Continuum of Care Permanent Supportive Housing (Shelter + Care) provides rental subsidy and supportive services for chronically homeless individuals;
- ➔ Aspire provides Case Management and Outreach to chronically homeless individuals;
- ➔ Impact Project provides Case Management for chronically homeless individuals and Housing Location services for all Seminole County homeless. The County funds Healthcare Center for the Homeless, Pathway Homes, and Homeless Services Network;
- ➔ The County funds provide 1st month rental assistance to homeless households; and
- ➔ SHIP funds provide deposit assistance for homeless households.



CONCLUSION

As the population of the County continues to increase and the need to promote the economic health of the County remains essential, the availability of affordable and workforce housing will be crucial for the County to flourish.

The Seminole County Attainable Housing Strategic Plan is not a panacea but a good first step to put in motion a program to diminish the lack of affordable housing that threatens the stability of the County and the region.

The goal of the Plan is to increase the supply of affordable and workforce housing and to preserve the existing supply through a variety of regulatory tools and programs so that housing is attainable to current and future residents of Seminole County. Attainable housing is achieved by providing a full range of housing options at all price points providing a greater quality of life for all. Transportation must also be taken into account when determining housing affordability, therefore, the Action Plan also seeks to put forth action items to increase the availability to transit and multiple modes of transportation.

The Plan is a living document that will be modified and updated as goals are achieved, methods and programs vetted, and new approaches identified. This will be a continuous effort that will take collaboration between local government and many sectors of the community.