



**Affordable Housing Advisory Committee
Report to Board of County Commissioners
SHIP Affordable Housing Incentive Strategies**

October 16, 2024

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**FOR SUBMISSION TO:
FLORIDA HOUSING FINANCE CORPORATION**



BACKGROUND

As a recipient of State Housing Initiative Partnership (SHIP) funds, Pinellas County established an affordable housing advisory committee in May 2008, as required by Florida Statute section 420.9076. The Affordable Housing Advisory Committee (AHAC Committee) is responsible for reviewing policies, land development regulations, the Comprehensive Plan Policy, and other aspects of the County's policies and procedures that affect the cost of housing. In addition, the AHAC Committee is responsible for making recommendations to encourage affordable housing.

The AHAC Committee is required to submit an incentive report on an annual basis. The report includes recommendations by the committee as well as comments on the implementation of incentives for the following eleven distinct areas:

- The processing of approvals of development orders or permits, as defined in s. 163.3164(7) and (8), for affordable housing projects is expedited to a greater degree than other projects.
- The modification of impact-fee requirements, including reduction or waiver of fees and alternative methods of fee payment for affordable housing.
- The allowance of flexibility in densities for affordable housing.
- The reservation of infrastructure capacity for housing for very-low-income persons, low-income persons, and moderate-income persons.
- The allowance of affordable accessory residential units in residential zoning districts.
- The reduction of parking and setback requirements for affordable housing.
- The allowance of flexible lot configurations, including zero-lot-line configurations for affordable housing.
- The modification of street requirements for affordable housing.
- The establishment of a process by which a local government considers, before adoption, policies, procedures, ordinances, regulations, or plan provisions that increase the cost of housing.
- The preparation of a printed inventory of locally owned public lands suitable for affordable housing.
- The support of development near transportation hubs and major employment centers and mixed-use developments.

COMMITTEE COMPOSITION

The County Commission appoints members to the Committee. Section 420.9076 of the Florida Statutes identifies the requirements of the Committee composition. The committee consists of eleven 11 members, including representation from one locally elected official. Members of the Committee represent the following categories:

- Citizen actively engaged in the residential home building industry in connection with affordable housing.
- Citizen actively engaged in the banking or mortgage banking industry in connection with affordable housing.

- Citizen actively engaged as an advocate for low-income persons in connection with affordable housing.
- Citizen actively engaged as a for-profit provider of affordable housing.
- Citizen actively engaged as a not-for-profit provider of affordable housing.
- Citizen residing within the jurisdiction of the local governing body making the appointments.

The current AHAC Committee Members are:

Name	Category Represented	Membership Term
Paul Burroughs	Banking Industry	02/26/23 - 02/25/27
Estelle DeMuesy	Financial Industry	05/21/24 - 12/31/26
Robyn Fiel	Mortgage/Real Estate Professional	04/01/22 - 03/31/26
Steve Baumann	Resident of Jurisdiction	02/01/23 - 02/01/26
Tammy Hicks	Affordable Housing Provider	11/01/23 - 10/31/26
Shannon L. Love	Resident of Jurisdiction	11/01/23 – 10/31/26
Elise Minkoff	Low Income Advocate	11/01/23 – 10/31/26
Jordan Myers	Realtor	08/26/24 – 08/25/28
Rene Flowers	Elected Official	12/21/23 - 12/01/24
Sean King	Not-For-Profit Developer	11/01/23 – 10/31/26
Frances Pheeny	Not-For-Profit Provider	11/01/23 – 10/31/26

AFFORDABLE HOUSING INCENTIVES BACKGROUND

The intent of the Pinellas County Affordable Housing Incentives is to provide private sector builders and developers with regulatory and financial incentives to produce affordable housing in Pinellas County. The incentives listed below are made available by the Board of County Commissioners in order to encourage development of affordable housing in unincorporated Pinellas County.

- Expedited Permit Processing
- Review Fees May be Waived or Paid by the County.
- Allowance for Increased Density Levels
- Reduction of Parking Requirements
- Reduction of Setback Requirements
- Allowance of Zero-Lot-Line Configurations
- Street Design (Modification of Street Requirements)
- Donation of Publicly Owned Land
- Identifying Qualified Buyers or Renters
- Accessory Dwelling Units
- Affordable Housing Development (Mixed-Use Developments)

Projects seeking to use affordable incentives must be certified as Affordable Housing Developments prior to receiving any incentives listed above.

The Housing & Community Development Department administers the Affordable Housing Development (AHD) certification process to verify that projects meet the definition of affordable housing. Developers interested in applying to receive AHD incentives must complete an Affordable Housing Development application and identify those incentives for which they intend to apply. County staff reviews AHD applications, determines AHD certification eligibility and advises applicants of the affordability restrictions and requirements.

Committee member meetings were held to have discussion about potential changes to each of the incentives. Meeting dates were:

- March 6, 2024
- April 2, 2024
- June 5, 2024
- October 1, 2024 (Draft report & public hearing) (postponed)
- October 16, 2024 Public Hearing

The meetings focused on review of incentives and how recommendations could be closely coordinated with the proposed Code updates for the County. The Live Local Act was also a part of the meeting discussions and how changes could impact affordable housing. The Committee also was provided affordable housing local program changes that could enhance affordable housing development for the County.

As a guide to input received, staff prepared the draft 2024 report for discussion and approval of the recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners on December 19, 2024. The draft report was provided to the AHAC Committee and discussed with County staff members at the October 16, 2024 public hearing. If approved by the Board of County Commissioners, the recommendations will be used to implement the Local Housing Assistance Plan (LHAP).

AFFORDABLE HOUSING INCENTIVES RECOMMENDATIONS

As part of the Affordable Housing Development Incentives and Certification AHAC review process in 2024, the committee heard more detail regarding the waiver of the Multi-Modal Impact Fees and changes to development of Accessory Dwelling Units. The following topics were reviewed by AHAC, which assessed the existing processes and strategies included in the Land Development Code and how the Live Local Act impacts the existing strategies. The recommendations are intended to address the need to advance the County's goals in producing more affordable housing units through the land development process.

EXPEDITED PERMITTING

Current Process: Builders and developers must submit an Affordable Housing Development AHD application to the Housing and Community Development Department. Staff reviews applications to determine eligibility as an affordable development. If a project is certified as an AHD, the developer is provided with a certification to be submitted with the permit as it is reviewed by Building & Review Services. Applications with the certification are given priority review with a target to complete the review process in two weeks. In addition to expedited permit processing, AHD's are entitled to permit and review fee waivers.

Existing Strategy: Expedited Permit Processing: A two-week turn-around time is being requested for site plan review for an affordable housing development. To assist in achieving this goal, an early assistance pre-application meeting will be required between the applicant and county staff. The development review administrator or designee will serve as an ombudsman to assist the applicant in achieving an expeditious review.

AHAC Committee Recommendation: The streamlined process was recommended to assist in minimizing turn-around time and provide a more definitive process for administrative approval needs.

MODIFICATION OF IMPACT FEES

Existing Strategy: Review fees may be waived or paid by the County: The County Administrator is authorized to waive all fees for affordable housing units, except where "bond covenants" (i.e. on water, sewer connection fees) or other legal constraints prevent such waiving. Subsidies for payment of fees may be provided in the form of deferred payment or low interest loans. The department of community development shall administer a program to assist the applicant subject to available funds.

AHAC Committee Recommendation: The recommendation is to consider providing a waiver of the multi-modal transportation impact fee for affordable housing developments. The Committee was provided an update on the engagement of a consultant to review the overall fee structure, including affordable housing. Recommendations and a presentation to the Committee will occur once a preliminary report is made available.

FLEXIBLE DENSITIES

Existing Strategy: Allowance of increased density levels: A density bonus of up to 50 percent above the normal density permitted by this chapter may be provided as a special exception pursuant to article II, division 7 of this chapter. Such bonus shall be subject to compatibility with the surrounding natural and physical environment, site constraints, concurrency management requirements and shall be in keeping with the purpose and intent of this chapter.

In order to achieve additional density in single-family districts, a reduction in the required lot size by up to 30 percent may be authorized. However, lot sizes should be controlled on periphery lots adjacent to single-family districts to maintain neighborhood compatibility.

Periphery lots may be reduced in size no more than ten percent of the existing required lot size. To be eligible for such bonus, development must comply with (138-211).

AHAC Committee Recommendation: In 2022, the committee provided overall support for removing the 50% cap for a density bonus, allowing for the potential of up to 100% where it is consistent with the surrounding site conditions. The committee still supports allowing a maximum of 100% density bonus and the amount is controlled by land use and site conditions.

PARKING AND SETBACK REQUIREMENTS

Existing Strategies: *Reduction of parking requirements:* Parking requirements may be reduced where it can be shown that such reduction will be compatible with the surrounding neighborhood and not cause an adverse impact to the neighborhood.

AHAC Committee Recommendation: The 2022 recommendation was to allow for increased reductions based upon type of development, such as those for senior citizens and veterans; and that guidance related to the requirement of a parking study in order for an applicant to be granted should be considered. As a result, the proposed change allows a 10% parking reduction and an additional 5% for seniors, special needs, student housing or veterans.

Existing Strategy: *Reduction of setback requirements:* Setback requirements may be reduced up to 25 percent provided such reductions are not permitted for structures along the periphery of the AHD. Reductions along the periphery or in excess of the 25 percent limitation may be considered by the board of adjustment.

AHAC Committee Recommendation: The Committee again recommended that there be clear guidance provided as it relates to street design and neighborhood compatibility and also provide a potential tie to building height and adjacent use.

AFFORDABLE ACCESSORY RESIDENTIAL UNITS

There was considerable discussion by the Committee regarding the code amendment changes that were proposed to the Board of County Commissioners in July, 2024. Proposed changes included 750 sf to 1,000 sf, and exemption from parking requirements unless the unit is over 750 sf. Waiver of development review fees were also proposed as well as the waiver of owner-occupied residency.

Existing Strategies: *Guest Cottages:* In residential districts, accessory apartments, garage apartments, and guest houses may be permitted as accessory uses to any single-family detached home in all residential districts subject to the applicable district regulations and the following requirements:

AHAC Committee Recommendation: Committee concurred with the recommended changes that were part of the code amendment. The final public hearing was held July 30, 2024 as part of the BCC approval, with support for recommended changes.

FLEXIBLE LOT CONFIGURATIONS

Existing Strategy: Allowance of zero-lot-line configurations: Zero lot line configurations will be permitted in all single-family residential districts as follows:

- a. Zero lot line configuration when not located on the periphery of the AHD may be permitted provided no setback is required on one side of the lot and the setback on the opposite side is double the normal requirement of the district in which the AHD is located.
- b. Zero lot line configuration proposed on the periphery of an AHD where located in a single-family residential district may be permitted as a special exception pursuant to article II division 7 of this chapter.

AHAC Committee Recommendation: Committee recognizes that this is part of the overall design process and that there needs to be a definitive process and guidelines for developers. A procedure is needed.

MODIFICATION OF STREET REQUIREMENTS

Existing Strategy: Street Design (Modification of street requirements): Modifications in street layout and design may be permitted subject to site constraints, type and intensity of development, and compatibility with surrounding development. The county public works director or his designee may recommend such modifications as deemed appropriate to achieve the intent of this section. However, such recommendation will be in keeping with standard, safe engineering practice and construction standards generally shall not be modified.

AHAC Committee Recommendation: The Committee recognizes that these requirements are part of the review process; however, strongly recommend a definitive and streamlined process be developed to better inform developers of the requirements, especially for affordable housing developments.

PROCESS OF ONGOING REVIEW / ESTABLISHMENT OF ONGOING OVERSIGHT

The role of Staff is to review proposed updates to policies, procedures, ordinance, regulations or other provisions that would affect the cost of producing housing. Staff will provide the AHAC Committee with all proposed changes to allow the AHAC Committee an opportunity to review and comment on all proposals that would potentially affect the production of affordable housing.

AHAC Committee Recommendation: Incentive to remain without revision.

PUBLIC LAND INVENTORY

Existing Strategy: *Donation of publicly owned land.* County ordinance 88-47 currently permits donations of escheated property to nonprofit organizations. Using state or federal housing funds, the County may also make deferred payment or low-interest loans to both nonprofits and for-profits for the purchase of property when the use meets the requirements of the funding source.

AHAC Committee Recommendation: The Live Local Act requires that a list of publicly owned land be available to for-profit and non-profit developers for affordable housing and the process for obtaining the properties and providing a definitive affordability tracking component. This information is posted on the Real Estate Management website.

QUALIFIED BUYERS OR RENTERS

The purpose of this incentive is to create a pool of individuals that are eligible to purchase or rent affordable housing units. Several agencies receive funding to administer classes to help prepare residents become homeowners and to provide budgeting and foreclosure classes. The agencies and participants are provided information on affordable housing developments throughout the county.

Existing Strategy: *Identifying qualified buyers or renters.* Existing sources will be identified and made available to AHD's to provide assistance in locating a qualified pool of homebuyers and renters for the affordable units.

AHAC Committee Recommendation: Incentive to remain without revision.

SUPPORT OF DEVELOPMENT NEAR TRANSPORTATION HUBS

Existing Strategy: *Affordable housing development.* Up to ten units per acre shall be permitted in commercial zoning districts provided all development standards of the zoning district are adhered to. Where residential development is provided as upper floors above commercial uses, the allowable floor area permitted for the commercial use shall not be reduced.

AHAC Committee Recommendation: Incentive to remain without revision.