

Affordable Housing Advisory Committee
Report to the Charlotte County Board of County Commissioners
December 2013

Per state statute, the Affordable Housing Advisory Committee (AHAC) has continued the task of reviewing recommendations for increasing access to affordable housing within the County. This occurs at all AHAC meetings during the course of normal consideration of items brought before the Committee. All meetings were and are open to the public to participate and provide observations and comments. Community partners are all ex-officio invitees and those that wish to provide organizational reports do so. The AHAC meets quarterly and all meetings are noticed to the public via the Charlotte County web site, the CCTV television broadcast system, postings in all public sites that have all government meetings posted. This provides numerous opportunities for public awareness and involvement. Additionally, Charlotte County is committed to Customer Services and therefore, there is, in place, a customer services survey form that is given to all clients encountered during the year. Surveys are reviewed as received and summarized at year end for reporting to County Management.

In the course of these meetings, the AHAC continually considers the State-Mandated Program Components as required by Florida Statute 420.9076. In addition, the Committee evaluates other policies and programs to further advance the creation of affordable housing within the county. The recommendations below were adopted by the Charlotte County Board of County Commissioners in 2008 and are still in place currently.

I. State-Mandated Programs Components:

Expedited Permitting

AHAC Recommendation: A simple, understood, and consistent process has been established(Section 3-9-5.2 of the '98 County Code. This process allows the Housing Manager to sign the Expedited Permitting Requests when delegated by the County Administrator. This is designed to shorten the time required to receive the expedited permitting request. Information about this program, as well as an application, is posted on the County web site.

Board response: voted to provide expedited permitting when this was presented and is still in place currently. The County Administrator signs the Expedited Permitting Request when submitted through the Housing Division office after verification of affordable housing projects.

Modification of Impact Fee Requirements

AHAC Recommendation: There should be no special modification or waiving of impact fees for affordable housing developments. However, it would be beneficial to have a dedicated source of funding to help affordable housing providers pay the impact fees. Possible funding sources include:

- fees charged to developers of both residential and commercial properties (other than affordable housing providers);
- interest from the impact fee trust fund;
- another source of state funds;
- a one cent per square foot fee on development;

Flexibility in Densities

AHAC Recommendation: The County should create a density bank for unused density within the county that can be used in specially designated sending zones where the development of more affordable housing would be desirable. Inclusionary Zoning should be mandatory for large residential developments within the County.

Board response: the County has created a land density bank for this use, however, to utilize land density credits they must be bought from the owner, government or private.

Affordable Accessory Dwelling Units

AHAC Recommendation: The County should encourage the development of accessory dwelling units, possibly as a Special Exception (with a decreased application fee) primarily to assist elderly and disabled individuals. Occupancy in these units should be limited. In general, accessory dwelling unit is a separate, complete housekeeping unit with a separate entrance, kitchen, sleeping area, and full bathroom facilities, which is an attached or detached extension to an existing single-family structure.

Transfer of Development Rights

AHAC Recommendation: See recommendation for flexible densities.

Reduction of Parking and Setback Requirements

AHAC Recommendation: This is not currently an issue in the county.

Flexible Lot Configuration

AHAC Recommendation: The County does allow for flexibility on setbacks and lot sizes to allow for the construction of affordable housing on “non-conforming” and irregularly shaped lots. Cluster developments may be allowed through a Special Exception application, if approved.

Modification of Sidewalk and Streetwalk Requirements

AHAC Recommendation: Reduced sidewalk requirements could be used as an incentive for the inclusion of affordable housing in a large-scale development. County development standards are not as restrictive as other jurisdictions which promote affordable housing.

Consideration of Any Proposal that May Impact Housing Costs

AHAC Recommendation: AHAC does need to have review of actions by the County that will impact the cost of housing. This would need to be part of the review process and procedures.

Printed Inventory of Public Lands Suitable for Affordable Housing

AHAC Recommendation: The County makes a list of public lands available suitable for affordable housing development. This list is made available to the general public when requested and can be made available via the County’s web site.

Development Near Transportation Hubs, Major Employment Centers, and Mixed-Use Development

Charlotte is a “suburban and rural” type of county excepting the heavily populated coastal areas. It has no mass transit system but is considering some limited fixed route experiments to connect with

surrounding communities out of the county. There is a growing, limited use regional airport as well as recently built and opened trucking distribution centers. This will necessitate the rethinking of transportation needs in the County. These developmental events are creating new employment center. Mixed use development is the current policies contained in the County Comprehensive Plan.

To be considered (These were the suggestions from the last AHAC report in 2008):

II. Other Public Policies Suggestions:

1. Require up to a 30-year affordability compliance period for any property receiving county funds.
2. Recommend a reduction in impact fees based on green or hurricane-resistant design.
3. An annual housing needs assessment should be done and provided to AHAC and BCC annually dependent on available funds.
4. Need to increase communication between Community Development Department and the Housing division.
5. Have the county donate one or two parcels of land per year for the development of affordable housing.
6. Create a program within the county government that would allow county employees to make a VOLUNTARY contribution to this fund directly from their paychecks of \$5 or another amount. The fund could then be used specifically to assist county employees with rental and/or mortgage assistance as well as property taxes on a first come/first served basis. Other large employers in the community could be encouraged to create a similar program.

III. New SHIP Programs to Consider:

1. Require developers seeking public funds to hire at least 50% of their labor from within Charlotte County. Additional points in the application evaluation process will be granted to developers who commit to using a higher percentage.
2. Give a preference, require, or provide an incentive to developers who construct green buildings. An incentive could be in a reduction in impact fees if the property installs energy and water-efficient fixtures that would limit the property's impact on local services.
3. Provide up to \$150,000 (rather than the standard \$75,000 per development) for proposed rental communities that agree to keep rents 10% below the maximum allowable rent level under the LIHTC program, dependent on available funds.
4. Create more rent-to-own programs to ease households into homeownership.