

Supporting Regional Housing Coordination

Initiative Summary Statement:

Leverage existing relationships between jurisdictional housing leaders to develop and execute a regional strategic housing plan aimed at increasing attainable and affordable housing.

Initiative Description:

Objective: This Initiative proposes that the region develop and utilize a housing-focused strategic plan to identify common ground solutions that result in thoughtful development patterns and increased public benefit throughout the County. The housing sector uses critical data (e.g., projected population, transportation route use) and policies (e.g., zoning, codes, allowable land use) to plan for new and re-development.

A strategic housing plan that identifies community-accepted tools to increase attainable and workforce housing would focus efforts across public, private, and nonprofit entities involved in planning and real estate development.

A strategic housing plan could address the following strategies:

- Planning around employment hubs to meets the workforce's needs for housing, transportation, access to critical services, and demand for amenities;
- Expanding or adding new mixed-use neighborhoods through incentives or zoning changes;
- The use of land trusts (i.e., an organization of joint landowners that take stewardship or partial control over property with the goal of managing long-term costs for tenets);
- "Planning housing close to tourist dependent beach communities to meet the needs of the workforce and mitigate traffic congestion."
- Improving and adding transportation modes/routes, in alignment with expected development;
- Identifying parking policies that resolve challenges existing pre-disaster and potentially newly arising in the post-disaster environment;
- Promotion of new stormwater infrastructure protecting new and developing neighborhoods from flood risk.

Need: The lack of attainable housing necessary to support the Lee County area workforce is an underlying resilience challenge that can be exacerbated by major storms and/or other shocks. More than 37,000 households in the County pay more than 50 percent of their household income toward housing expenses; of those, 43.3 percent are households making

between 0-30 percent of the Area Median Income (AMI).¹¹ The Countywide “maximum affordable home purchase price” was \$145,522, while the 2017 median sales price for a single-family home was \$246,087.¹² Affordable housing research in the region has also identified the lack of transportation and housing near employment nodes as a current challenge for households with low incomes.

Throughout the County there are multiple programs to address the existing housing cost burden and provide incentives to homebuyers, such as the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Homeownership Assistance Program, HOME Down Payment Assistance Program, and the Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP), but there is still a great need for affordable housing.

Lee County and its municipalities also provide an array of incentives that reduce costs for development with the goal of producing more attainable housing, which could ultimately reduce competition and pricing for housing. The continued evaluation and strategic use of incentives could benefit from cross-community coordination and discussion.

Regional Approach: Many of the housing challenges in the Lee County area cross municipal boundaries and involve core community characteristics requiring strategic development to improve and maximize neighborhoods’ potential. The first step is identifying an existing vehicle - or confirming the need for a new one - for a post-Hurricane Ian vision for collaborative housing planning. Jurisdictions can then evaluate existing affordable housing programs and efforts within the County to identify partners and programs, considering any changes that may have resulted from Hurricane Ian and the first year of recovery. Working formally and informally, jurisdictional leaders can implement approaches and coordinate to leverage technical assistance from regional housing experts like the Florida Housing Coalition, which has deep expertise in the use of land trusts and other innovative approaches to attainable housing.

¹¹ Lee County. *Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice 2019-2023*. <https://www.leegov.com/dhs/Documents/Planning/PY%202019%20AI%20-%20Final%20Draft%20for%20Public%20Comment.pdf>

¹² Lee County. *Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice 2019-2023*. <https://www.leegov.com/dhs/Documents/Planning/PY%202019%20AI%20-%20Final%20Draft%20for%20Public%20Comment.pdf>

The need for coordination extends further than between local governments and into the private sector, recognizing the number of private sector development stakeholders involved in all types of property development. Housing leaders can use a joint vision to help communicate with and incentivize the housing sector to determine gaps and the feasibility of proposed actions that align with community needs and demand.

Impact: Effective coordination in land use and housing recovery planning, that leverages the knowledge and resources of the government, community-based organizations, the private sector, and the public at large, can result in a thriving County. Allowing housing leaders to develop and collaborate on elements of a housing-focused strategic plan would encourage public engagement, jurisdictional coordination, and mediate community differences in the pursuit of common solutions.

By taking a regional approach, the housing sector will benefit from a multi-jurisdictional oversight group, aligning the needs of differing communities under one umbrella to develop a more complete understanding of the community's assets and liabilities as they plan for the future. A regional housing plan could identify areas to develop new housing in alignment with community services, amenities, and critical infrastructure, while acting as a catalyst to build in a collective manner. Identifying regional development gaps and ensuring coordination between partners will increase overall success during project implementation, including by expediting construction and permitting, so that households move into a home on a quicker timeline. Strengthening the relationship between local governments and the private sector could also assist in promoting commercial development like restaurants, entertainment, and/ or retail in conjunction with housing. Developing cohesive regional policies that create a consistent process for new developments across municipalities will be a more conducive environment to attract developers, especially those who focus on affordable and mixed-use housing. If new housing is constructed near employment centers and public transportation hubs, then it can reduce the reliance on transportation and can reduce traffic congestion in high volume areas by providing alternate modes of travel.

Key Considerations:

- The region may have need of a post-storm, countywide 'housing gap analysis' to inform planning priorities. Analysis may want to understand the types of housing needed vs what is being built.
- Repairing, renovating, and redeveloping affordable, attainable, and workforce housing damaged or destroyed by Hurricane Ian is a high priority.
- As part of this Initiative, stakeholders can identify and preserve existing incentives or other strategies that contribute to maintaining the existing affordable housing stock.

- Aligning across jurisdictions may present opportunities for joint legislative agendas or the pursuit of additional funding.

Co-Sponsoring Branches:

Housing, Infrastructure, Planning & Capacity, and Economic Recovery

Stakeholders:

- County planning and utilities department
- Municipal planning and utilities departments
- State and Local Housing Coalitions
- Housing Authorities
- Construction and Real Estate Associations Neighborhood Organizations
- Professional organizations representing the planning development community
- Utility Providers
- Commercial Property Developers

Potential Funding Sources:

- United States Department of Housing and Urban Development
- United States Department of Veterans Affairs
- United States Department of Agriculture
- United States Department of Health and Human Services
- United States Small Business Administration
- Florida Housing Finance Corporation
- Florida Department of Commerce

Resources:

- Lee County [*Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing*](#)