

# ESCAMBIA COUNTY AFFORDABLE HOUSING INCENTIVE PLAN REVIEW

## 1. BACKGROUND

The Sadowski Affordable Housing Act as approved by the Florida Legislature and codified as Chapter 420 of the Florida Statutes requires the development of an Affordable Housing Incentive Plan by all local governments electing to participate in the housing production and preservation initiatives authorized by the Act. In August, the Escambia County Board of County Commissioners, jointly with the City of Pensacola, adopted by Resolution No. 2015-107 the members to serve on the Escambia-Pensacola Affordable Housing Advisory Committee (AHAC). The Escambia-Pensacola AHAC reviewed the implementation of the Affordable Housing Incentive Plan and provided these recommended changes for the Board of County Commissioner's consideration and adoption.

## 2. PURPOSE

The purpose of the Incentive Plan is to set out the deliberations and recommendations for monetary and non-monetary incentives targeting regulatory reform with respect to affordable housing including the evaluation of the established policies, procedures, ordinances, land development regulations and the comprehensive plan. All recommendations should encourage or facilitate affordable housing while protecting the ability of the property to appreciate in value. The Plan encompasses the specific recommendations of the AHAC all of which were voted upon and approved at a Public Hearing on **November 10, 2015**. This Plan details existing County housing related policies/procedures to be undertaken by the County in support of affordable housing.

## 3. AFFORDABLE HOUSING INCENTIVES

**INCENTIVE A:** 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.

Discussion: Escambia County is continually reassessing the permitting function to improve permit processing efficiency and reduce the time required for issuing residential permits. This process incorporates specific actions that will enhance expedited processing for documented affordable housing developments/projects within the County. The Development Services Division will take actions necessary to expedite and/or avoid delay of affordable housing developments which incorporate financing via Federal, State or designated local affordable housing programs or initiatives. Such developments will be given review priority in accordance with provisions of the Housing Element of the Escambia County Comprehensive Plan.

The current permitting review process for single family homes or duplexes in

established/platted, properly zoned subdivisions shall be generally retained as this process provides a permit turnaround time of less than 4 days. Affordable housing permit applications will be given priority in the event the permit approval time should reach a level in excess of 7 days in the future.

Recommendation: The turnaround time for building permits for single family or small scale developments are currently acceptable. The committee suggests that the County insert information on the Building Permit application noting if the project is being developed with affordable housing funding (HOME, CDBG, SHIP, etc) in order to better track the processing of developments associated with these programs.

**INCENTIVE B: THE MODIFICATION OF IMPACT FEE REQUIREMENTS, INCLUDING REDUCTION OF WAIVER OF FEES AND ALTERNATIVE METHODS OF FEE PAYMENT FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING.**

Discussion: The County does not have impact fee requirements. Emerald Coast Utilities Authority (ECUA), the primary local water and sewer provider in the urban area of the County, does assess impact fees. The County and City have worked with ECUA regarding waivers and allowances for lower income residents or with affordable housing developments and will continue to do so.

At this point, it does not seem economically feasible for the County to waive or accept alternate methods of fee payment for developments, including those for affordable housing.

Recommendation: The Affordable Housing Advisory Committee draft a letter for transmittal to the ECUA Board requesting their consideration of to allow a waiver of impact fees in support of affordable housing development.

**INCENTIVE C: THE ALLOWANCE OF FLEXIBILITY IN DENSITY LEVELS FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING.**

Discussion: The existing land use regulations provide alternatives for increased density levels for residential developments. The County Land Development Code clearly provides options for increased density levels in appropriate residential zone designations specifically for the purpose of increasing housing affordability generally through the use of a Planned Unit Development (PUD), which is accomplished with coordinated predevelopment review meetings with the developer.

Recommendation: The incentive is being implemented in accordance with the plan and no changes are recommended. The AHAC will review the incentive on a triannual basis.

**INCENTIVE D: THE RESERVATION OF INFRASTRUCTURE CAPACITY FOR HOUSING FOR VERY-LOW-INCOME PERSONS, LOW-INCOME PERSONS AND MODERATE- INCOME PERSONS.**

Discussion: Infrastructure Capacity is not an issue for development of affordable

housing within the larger urban area of the county as water, sewer, electricity, and roadways are more than adequate for concurrency. Additionally, all areas within the City and County Community redevelopment areas are exempt from traffic concurrency. These areas are often the focus of housing redevelopment.

Recommendation: This incentive is being implemented in accordance with the plan and no changes were recommended. The AHAC will review the incentive on a triannual basis.

**INCENTIVE E: THE ALLOWANCE FOR AFFORDABLE ACCESSORY RESIDENTIAL UNITS IN RESIDENTIAL ZONING DISTRICTS**

Discussion: Accessory dwellings are allowed by both City and County Codes and are used frequently in both jurisdictions.

Recommendation: This incentive is being implemented in accordance with the plan and no changes were recommended. The AHAC will review the incentive on a triannual basis.

**INCENTIVE F: THE REDUCTION OF PARKING AND SETBACK REQUIREMENTS FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING.**

Discussion: Currently, the County may grant a reduction in the parking requirements through its PUD process. Affordable housing is typically given consideration (along with site design and features) when reviewing PUDs for approval. The PUD process has been used often for residential developments with affordable set-asides and/or mixed income/mixed use developments.

Recommendation: This incentive is being implemented in accordance with the plan and no changes were recommended. The AHAC will review the incentive on a triannual basis.

**INCENTIVE G: THE ALLOWANCE OF FLEXIBLE LOT CONFIGURATIONS, INCLUDING ZERO-LOT-LINE CONFIGURATIONS**

Discussion: The County land development code provides for the use of zero-lot-line configurations in development of residential housing.

Recommendation: This incentive is being implemented in accordance with the plan and no changes were recommended. The AHAC will review the incentive on a triannual basis.

**INCENTIVE H: THE MODIFICATION OF STREET REQUIREMENTS FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

Discussion: The County provides allowances for modification of street, curb and gutter, and sidewalk requirements within residential developments through its PUD process.

Recommendation: This incentive is being implemented in accordance with the plan and no changes were recommended. The AHAC will review the incentive on a triannual basis.

**INCENTIVE I:** 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.

Discussion: The review process is in place in both jurisdictions. Review information and comments are provided by affordable housing or development staff for consideration by policy makers.

Recommendation: This incentive is being implemented in accordance with the plan and no changes were recommended. The AHAC will review the incentive on a triannual basis.

**INCENTIVE J:** THE PREPARATION OF A PRINTED INVENTORY OF LOCALLY OWNED PUBLIC LANDS SUITABLE FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT.

Discussion: The County has a listing of locally owned properties for sale or donation, many of which have been historically offered to private or nonprofit housing developers for construction of permanent affordable housing.

Recommendation: The committee recommends that the County's inventory list be reviewed for suitability for affordable housing development with an updated list to be provided to the County Commissioners.

**INCENTIVE K:** THE SUPPORT OF DEVELOPMENT NEAR TRANSPORTATION HUBS AND MAJOR EMPLOYMENT CENTERS AND MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENTS.

Discussion: Development regulations of both jurisdictions strongly support and encourage the location of affordable housing, including a priority for mixed use/mixed income, housing near transit stops/interchanges, and employment/educational centers (urban areas).

Recommendation: This incentive is being implemented in accordance with the plan and no changes were recommended. The AHAC will review the incentive on a triannual basis.

#### **4. ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS:**

No additional Recommendations were made by the Committee.