

Charlotte County update for 2/19/20

## **Commission reviews affordable housing strategy**

By Ray Sandrock, Charlotte County administrator

After the Charlotte County Commission set a bold goal of adding thousands of affordable housing units as part of the its strategic plan, I established a task force to present potential programs to attract developers.

The task force was charged with recommending incentives to attract affordable housing development, establishing tools and a process to standardize access to those incentives and the identification of a source of funding for the affordable housing trust fund to deliver those incentives.

At Tuesday's commission workshop, the task force outlined a program called Charlotte HOME (Housing Opportunities Made Easier). A memo to the board detailed "a standardized application process for affordable housing developers to request impact fee waivers and other incentives (fee deferrals, density incentive/bonus, land donation, local government contribution for tax credit applications, etc.) based on the type of proposed housing, the number of units, the term of affordability, average affordability of units, and other county priorities."

The plan calls for multiple tiers of incentive eligibility for developers based on the number of units, the length of time units will be set aside for qualified renters and project readiness.

At its workshop, the board discussed the proposal and shared their thoughts on how to implement it. Commissioners praised the simplified framework for a variety of affordable housing strategies and discussed the level of county investment and using successful programs in neighboring counties as a model for refining it.

The Charlotte HOME concept would be in addition to the recently implemented Local Government Area of Opportunity process and a program to give surplus property to pre-qualified non-profit developers.

Commissioners expressed concern about ensuring developers can't back out of affordable housing agreements without incurring a penalty. They stressed the need for transparency in fees and land-use regulations. The board suggested adjustments to the qualification matrix to add emphasis to developer experience and prior outcomes.

Commissioners reiterated their commitment to the affordable housing goal and agree some county investment must be a component of the strategy. The refined proposal will return for board discussion and direction this Tuesday. For information about the Charlotte HOME proposal, visit [CharlotteCountyFL.gov](http://CharlotteCountyFL.gov) and click BCC Agendas under Popular Links, then click Agenda Archive and February 18, 2020 Board Workshop Agenda.

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