



# 2024-2025 Affordable Housing Incentives Report

Presented by the Seminole County Affordable Housing Advisory Committee

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In accordance with Florida Statute 420.9076, the Affordable Housing Advisory Committee (AHAC), with support from Seminole County Community Services Department staff is charged with preparing the annual Affordable Housing Incentives Report, which provides a list of incentives and recommendations to the Florida Housing Finance Corporation and the local governing board that may be used to foster increased development of affordable housing throughout Seminole County.

On May 13, 2025, the Seminole County Board of County Commissioners approved and adopted the 2025-2028 Local Housing Assistance Plan (LHAP). The LHAP included the following affordable housing incentives to be achieved during the implementation period:

1. Expedited Permitting (Required Incentive)
2. Ongoing Review of Policies, Procedures, Ordinances, and Regulations (Required)
3. Impact Fee Waivers or modifications

The AHAC also recommended activities to effectively manage the required incentives:

- Develop a certification process for expediting approvals for permitting and rezoning
- Create a process for developers to apply for impact fee reduction or waivers

### **Expedited Permitting Review**

Seminole County provides a 14-day plan review process for affordable housing development projects. During Program Year 2024-2025, the Attainable Housing Program Manager offered to act as a liaison between the Developer and the Development Services Department. By being listed as a consultant to the Developer on their permit application, it allows the Attainable Housing staff to receive notification during the permitting process. Once comments are issued by Building officials, the Attainable Housing Program Manager follows up with Developers to discuss any challenges they may have and offer assistance with finding solutions to resolve the issues. This ensures the developer's timely response to comments, which decrease delays in plan approvals.

### **Affordable Housing Project Certification:**

During Program Year 2024-2025, Seminole County's Attainable Housing team continued to implement the preapplication review process to confirm and certify affordable housing projects seeking any form of local subsidy. The Attainable Housing Program Manager

worked in conjunction with the Development Services Department to identify potential affordable housing projects. Specifically, when developers contact Development Services (in person or online) for a preapplication meeting to discuss their potential affordable housing projects, the Development Services staff connected the developer with the Attainable Housing Program to conduct a pre-application review of the project. In this session, the Attainable Housing staff:

- Reviewed the project utilizing the Attainable Housing Checklist, to determine whether the project meets HUD's development and affordability standards.
- Informed developers of the requirements for developments to be certified as an affordable housing project.

Once the projects are certified, the Attainable Housing team worked collaboratively with the developer by attending predevelopment meetings to assist with resolving issues that could impede the project's approval.

#### *Affordable Housing Incentives at Work*

Seminole County has continued to implement the recommended strategies identified in the Attainable Housing Strategic Plan, throughout the 2024-25 Program Year. These strategies included:

- Funding the General Affordable Housing Trust Fund
- Establishing an incentive program to reduce or subsidize impact fees, provide tax incentives, expedited permitting
- Leveraging County Development Rights

#### **Funding the Affordable Housing Trust Fund**

The Board of County Commissioners allocated \$500,000 to the General Affordable Housing Trust Fund (Trust Fund) from the County's General Fund, under Ordinance #2021-14 to assist in underwriting the cost of developing new affordable housing units. Additionally, the program income earned from the sale of homes funded through the American Rescue Plan Act Homeownership Program continued to be allocated to the Trust Fund to fund future affordable/attainable housing development. During the 2024-25 program year, Trust Funds were allocated to support affordable housing production and disposition activities, that included:

1. **Construction Loans:** Seminole County allocated over \$800,000 from the Trust Fund to Habitat for Humanity of Seminole County and Greater Apopka (Habitat) to complete the development of new single-family homeownership units for low-income households. The loan will be repaid to the County upon the sale of each

home. It is anticipated that roughly 75 percent of the initial loan amount will be returned as program income to the Trust Fund for future development.

2. **Purchase Assistance Funding:** Seminole County will also provide Habitat buyers purchasing homes funded through this program 20 percent of the purchase price as an interest-free, deferred, forgivable loan, to be applied towards down payment, closing costs, pre-paid costs, reserves, and principal reductions (if needed). These buyers will also receive up to 3.5 percent of the purchase price to be applied to closing costs. The purchase assistance is funded by the County reducing the construction loan amount to be repaid upon the sale of each home by the amount of purchase assistance provided, and securing the assistance with a zero percent interest, deferred-forgivable mortgage.

### **Establish Incentive Program to Reduce or Subsidize Impact Fees**

Seminole County Development Services continued to offer discounts or waivers on Mobility, Library, and Fire impact fee rates for qualified affordable housing development projects. Specifically, Development Services offers Impact Fee discounts for affordable housing units occupied by families with household incomes between 80.01 percent and 140 percent of the Area Media Income (AMI). As for housing units occupied by families with household incomes below 80 percent AMI, Impact Fees are waived.

### **Leverage County Development Rights**

Seminole County also leveraged its development rights to incentivize affordable housing development through programs, such as:

1. **Density Bonuses:** This is offered for affordable housing projects based on their future land use designation.
  - i. Properties with a future land use of Low Density Residential, Seminole County offers a maximum of 7 dwelling units per net buildable acre (DU/acre), which is otherwise 4 dwelling units per net buildable acre.
  - ii. Properties with a future land use of Medium Density Residential, Seminole County offers up to 12 DU/acre as opposed to the standard maximum of 10 DU/Acre.
  - iii. Properties with a future land use of High Density Residential, the County offers up to 22 DU/acre, as opposed to the standard maximum of 20 DU/acre.
2. **Public Land Utilization:** Additionally, Seminole County continues to donate surplus lots to qualified non-profit developers as an incentive to produce affordable housing units for low- to moderate-income first-time homebuyers.

Seminole County further incentivizes development by utilizing the Trust Fund to pay administrative cost and recording fees for surplus lots donated to non-profit developers.

#### *Future Actions*

For the 2025-26 Program Year, the AHAC is committed to further discussions on policies, ordinances, and regulations that may incentivize the development of affordable housing units. The committee will facilitate additional discussions on specific incentives, to include:

1. Recommending amending zoning policies to not count accessory dwelling units towards density for rural areas;
2. Recommending mirroring the Emergency Permitting processes enacted during declared disaster events as the Affordable Housing Expedited Permitting process;
3. Considering the possibility of imposing an "in-lieu fee" for developers that do not wish to develop affordable housing on their proposed sites, and
4. Mobility Impact Fees