

National Association for County Community and Economic Development
Awards of Excellence Committee

2018 Awards of Excellence

8/17/2018 deadline

**Orange County Government
Regional Affordable Housing Initiative - Orange County, FL**

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**Submitted: 8/16/2018 2:03:48 PM
(Pacific)**

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Entry Form [top](#)

1. Enter the name of the agency or agencies responsible for the program entry:

This information will be on the plaque if your entry wins the award.

Orange County, City of Orlando, Seminole County, Osceola County

2. Indicate the brief title of the program or name of the project to be considered for an award of excellence, using the exact wording that you would like to appear on a plaque, should your entry win:

Central Florida - Regional Affordable Housing Initiative

3. Indicate Congressional District(s) served by project and name(s) of U.S. Representatives and U.S. Senators:

Congressional Districts: FL 7, FL 8, FL 9, FL 10; U.S. Representatives: Stephanie Murphy (FL 7), Bill Posey (FL 8), Darren Soto (FL 9), Val Demings (FL 10); U.S. Senators: Bill Nelson, Marco Rubio

4. Indicate the awards category for which you are applying:

REMINDER – Multiple categories require multiple processing fees.

- Community Development
- Economic Development
- Homeless Coordination/Assistance
- Affordable Housing
- HOME Investment Partnerships Program
- Planning/Policy/Program Management
- Innovation

Program/Project Summary

5. Briefly describe the problem, the innovative solution, and results.

This brief summary is important and will be used to describe your program/project in NACCED's awards packet, on the web site, and in any communications with Congress or the Administration.

The growing housing shortage in the Central Florida region and its effects on the housing need prompted Orange County Mayor Teresa Jacobs to gather partners from Orange, Seminole and Osceola counties and the City of Orlando to explore the merits of a broadly established affordable housing strategy. Together, these jurisdictions launched the Regional Affordable Housing Initiative to study and implement potential solutions suited to the particular housing circumstances of Central Florida and its growing population.

The partners invested more than two years in this collaborative effort. To start the conversation with the community at large, Mayor Jacobs hosted the Regional Affordable Housing Summit on October 20, 2016. Planners, housing experts, developers, local government officials and community leaders representing the region gathered to discuss strategies, tools and best practices being implemented throughout Florida and across the country. In the subsequent months, a series of public workshops were held to further explore mechanisms of increasing the production and availability of affordable housing in the region.

Drawing on internal resources, consultants, housing industry representatives and observations from the community, the regional partners identified strong interest in new housing forms, improved housing diversity and enhanced local area resources targeted at affordable housing. Among the partners, there is broad agreement that a single solution targeted to a specific issue or population is no longer likely to be a sufficient strategy to advance an affordable housing agenda, and many approaches must be considered. As a result, the partners established a framework consisting of a shared mission, goals and strategies for addressing the housing need in the region. As part of the framework, several regulatory alternatives, incentives, funding mechanisms and coordinated partnerships were proposed as potential pieces to the puzzle.

The regional framework serves as a solid foundation on which to build a sustained approach. It is through the proposed strategies and tools that the partner jurisdictions will achieve their goals to Create, Diversify, Preserve, Integrate and Educate. Not all tools and devices will be equally effective, and some certainly require more time and effort than others to fully implement. The next steps will be weighed against the tools that each local jurisdiction elects to adopt, and the partners will continue to meet regularly to discuss their specific efforts and compare their progress.

Problem or Need

6. What circumstances or situation in your county stimulated the need for this program or project? What were the objectives in designing the program or project?

National and regional home prices and rents are pushing well above historic limits when compared to income and affordability. The American Community Survey reports that 230,344 households in Orange, Seminole and Osceola counties carry housing costs exceeding 30% of their incomes. This is about 31% of the region's total households. The greatest share of cost-burdened households in Central Florida lies within Orange County, with 153,969 households paying more than 30% of their incomes on housing costs. At the same time, according to the U.S. Census, regional median income is also among the lowest of any major metropolitan area in the nation. These Central Florida counties have a combined population of 2,106,251, and by 2040, it is estimated to increase by 47%, according to the Bureau of Economic and Business Research (BEBR). However, current housing production across the region is below levels needed to support this population growth, and this will only result in an increase of cost-burdened households, unless local jurisdictions step in to mitigate the problem.

Housing deliveries are at their lowest levels in years, creating a significant gap between the number of units being delivered to the market and the amount necessary to sustain demand. This overall shortfall is a major explanation for increasing housing prices for both renters and owners. Many reasons contribute to the shortage of housing delivery, including risk management concerns, loss of trade and industry resources, regulation, generally rising construction costs, and individualized housing needs or choices.

Based on data from the National Association of Homebuilders, the greater Orlando area is highly concentrated among a limited number of builders. As a result, homes are constructed in large volumes, relatively uniform in size, detached and in settings distant from job centers. Although the share of homeowners and family size are both shrinking, housing production in the region has continued to remain focused on the larger single-family home. As the large gap between consumer demand and actual housing deliveries supports higher housing prices, there are no apparent reasons for the housing industry to rethink its delivery methods, which is why it is crucial for local governments to take action.

In Central Florida, the market's housing choices are heavily influenced by existing transportation needs that consume financial resources otherwise available for housing. The Center for Neighborhood Technology recommends that a household should not spend more than 15% of its household budget on transportation costs. In Central Florida however, given the prominence of suburban development patterns distant from employment centers, average transportation costs constitute 25% of total household expenses. Due to the financial impacts that this has on a household, transportation matters must also be a major consideration in the affordability discussion.

Solution

7. Describe the critical elements of your project/program and how they remedy the problem or address the need described above. Include any key steps, decisions, partnerships, etc. How were the objectives met? Describe the innovation in this solution.

The regional partnership, comprised of local government representatives from Orange, Seminole and Osceola counties, and the City of Orlando, organized a community-wide public engagement effort that featured an initial summit, followed by a series of implementation workshops. These sessions brought together experts in the fields of housing, planning, development, financing and economics in order to convey a broad housing perspective.

The regional partners recognized that there were several immediate points of consideration. These centered on locations where the housing market had evidenced inefficiencies, what alternative housing types and designs should be encouraged, and how a shared strategy across jurisdictions might advance policies to enhance and diversify housing activity. To begin the conversation with the community, the initial summit was one of the first steps in discussing affordable housing solutions for Central Florida. Points of discussion focused on the national and regional affordable housing crisis, strategies that have been effective in other communities, and successful examples of affordable housing developments in Florida.

Following the summit, the first implementation workshop was held in order to help identify potential areas for future affordable housing development within the region. The University of Florida's Shimberg Center for Housing Studies created a GIS-based model that selected areas based on indicators such as proximity to public transportation and major job centers, and availability of community resources and services. Utilizing the model, a housing analysis was presented, with areas of access and opportunity identified on a regional scale.

The second workshop focused on innovative housing types and strategies that are context-sensitive and meet the needs of certain income thresholds. Topics discussed included mixed-use and mixed-income developments, smaller-footprint homes, and accessory dwelling units, among others. The third and final workshop, however, delved a little deeper, as it was geared towards identifying specific regulatory and financial mechanisms that support affordable housing production and preservation. Representatives from each of the partner jurisdictions presented the partnership's own plan of action for addressing the housing needs of the region.

Throughout this open exchange process, regional partners captured the collective opinions and ideas of the community and the industry and established a framework consisting of a common mission, goals, strategies and tools to address Central Florida's housing need. There is a strong commonality and purpose among the jurisdictions tied to five key goals: Create, Diversify, Preserve, Integrate and Educate. Joined by these five unified goals, the identified strategies and tools will mature more rapidly and receive greater exposure than if encouraged ad hoc by individual jurisdictions without consideration of the practices in neighboring settings.

Costs and Sources of Financing

8. Describe in as much detail as possible the source(s) and use(s) of funds to construct the project or start up the program, as well as the sources and uses of ongoing operating funds if applicable. Describe any innovative or unusual cost savings or financing techniques.

Most of the work as part of this initiative was completed in-house, utilizing the partner jurisdiction's staff resources. The summit and implementation workshops were funded through local funds from the partner jurisdictions. Consultants from the University of Florida's Shimberg Center for Housing Studies were hired in order to produce the Access and Opportunity model in preparation for the first implementation workshop. This GIS-based model explored the relationship between housing location and access to public transportation, major employment centers, and community resources and services. Consultants from the Community Solutions Group at GAI Consultants were also hired to assist with data analysis and development of the Executive Summary Report, which summarizes the regional initiative's findings and recommendations to guide decision-making among local government leaders.

Results

9. Describe the tangible results of the program. Describe how the project or program will be sustained over the long term. If the project or program is not currently operating, please explain

why not. How or why do you think important aspects of this project or program might be adaptable to other communities?

The shared approach that the regional partners have agreed to undertake is displayed through a framework identifying regulatory alternatives, financial commitments, partnership opportunities and other resources. They stem from community discussions, interactions with developers, research about best practices and staff evaluations. Together, these tools are intended to encourage housing solutions targeted at the region's populations most in need of affordable housing. The combined efforts seek to encourage housing in multiple forms, densities, sizes, price points and in areas with better access to services and opportunity.

The framework explicitly advises that certain changes will be more substantive than others, while it also accepts that each participating jurisdiction may define its needs differently. Some are small policy modifications, while others require a major commitment of time and resources. Some can occur quickly and have been characterized as short term (1 to 3 years). Others are expected to take several years and are characterized as long term (4 to 10 years).

Not all tools will be equally effective and some may take more effort to implement. The tools are broken up into three major categories: basic, progressive and transformational. Basic tools extend from existing and current planning practices and are mainly preparatory to other measures. Without these tools in place, further policy advancements seem more difficult or challenging. Progressive tools represent substantial efforts and could have major impacts on how, where and by whom housing is delivered. In effect, they are creating new systems of housing delivery. Finally, transformational tools seem the most likely to move the needle because they can be easily benchmarked against targeted numbers. These transformational ideas, however, are substantively dependent upon basic and progressive tools.

The regional framework serves as a solid foundation on which to build a sustained approach. It is through the proposed strategies and tools that the partner jurisdictions will achieve their goals to Create, Diversify, Preserve, Integrate and Educate. The next steps of the regional partnership will entail implementation and monitoring. Each jurisdiction will elect to adopt a specific set of tools in the following months and years. Of the five goals established, the partnership has agreed to make three a top priority: create opportunities for the development of affordable housing through regulations and incentives; encourage diversity of housing types and design; and preserve the existing affordable housing stock through financial mechanisms. The jurisdiction representatives will continue to meet on a quarterly basis to share their experiences and compare their progress in addressing the housing affordability challenge of Central Florida.

Application Questions [top](#)

Documents [top](#)

Documents Requested *

Photos/Visual Documentation

Required? Attached Documents *



[Regional Affordable Housing Initiative - Executive Summary Report](#)

[Regional Housing Partnership - PPT](#)

[Affordable Housing Initiative - webpage](#)

Other

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