

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **HOUSING ELEMENT**

#### **SUMMARY**

The Housing Element addresses several key issues including the provision of affordable housing; housing to accommodate populations with special needs; maintenance of the City's housing stock; protection of existing residential areas; and the provision of diversified housing opportunities to meet the needs of the population. Diversified housing and the support of Palm Coast's suburban character are guiding principles for the Imagine 2050 Vision as they are foundations of the city's future. By recognizing the importance of the city's established suburban neighborhoods, this Housing Element values the character and development features that make Palm Coast a great place to live.

Like all communities, the City has a need to balance the cost of housing with the income levels of available jobs in the community. This is basically what is meant by the term "affordable housing". Approximately 40% of the total households in the City fall into an income category below 80% of the Area Median Income (AMI) (i.e. defined as extremely low, very low, low, or moderate) where there is an identified need for affordable housing opportunities. The Housing Element promotes the City's role in the provision of affordable housing as it relates to assisting the private and non-profit sectors, which acts as the primary housing providers within the community. This Element also furthers available opportunities for the City to receive State and federal funding to assist with the provision of affordable housing and community development as the City's population continues to increase.

In addition to providing affordable housing for residents in certain income ranges, the Housing Element advances the City's role in providing housing opportunities for households with special needs. One identified special needs group of particular importance is the elderly. The Housing Element makes provisions to accommodate the future housing needs for the 65+-age cohort, which is 27.6% of the total population in 2023. Notably, the 45+ age group includes 77% of the City's population, where the median age is 50.3 years as of 2022, an increase from 44.4 years in 2010. Updated projections indicate that the percentage of the population over the age of 65 will continue to increase and become a larger segment of Palm Coast's total population. It is common that elderly residents utilize smaller dwelling units on smaller lots, assisted living, and age-in-place transitional housing facilities.

The Housing Element also identifies strategies to provide diversified housing opportunities not only for the elderly, but for all age groups. Currently, nearly 89% of the City's developed residential units are detached single family homes. Development over the recent years continue to mainly occur on the ITT platted lots. It is important to note that as the number of ITT lots diminish, new subdivisions have started to be platted along US-1 (within the Palm Coast Park DRI), as well as on infill "reserve" lots within the perimeter of the original ITT development area. Other areas of new development include the area south of the Flagler County Airport which were annexed into the City since the original adoption of the Comprehensive Plan in 2004. These areas of new development have provided opportunities to promote different lot sizes. The City also promotes multi-family housing units as the population grows. One of the key aspects of the Comprehensive Plan is to provide residential units in mixed-use areas where residents are within walking distance of commercial and recreational amenities.

At the same time, there is a paramount concern that existing residential areas must be protected from encroaching incompatible development and structural deterioration from age. As such, the Housing Element contains several strategies related to preserving residential areas and maintaining the local housing stock.

The City's expansion from 50 square miles at the time of its incorporation in 1999 to its current size of more than 97.34 square miles provide opportunities for the City to meet its future housing need and to increase the diversity of types of housing within the City. In addition, potential annexations of lands to the northwest of the existing City limits provide opportunity for the development of additional housing types.

A summary of the City's vision for housing and diversity demanded by a growing community may be summarized in a concept developed by City staff known as "Life Stage Housing".

Life stage housing encompasses a spectrum of residential options tailored to meet the diverse needs and circumstances of individuals and families across various stages of life. These stages typically include young adults starting out on their own, couples without children, families with children, empty nesters, retiree and including affordable housing, workforce housing, and special needs housing. Life stage housing aims to provide appropriate amenities, layouts, and features that cater to the particular lifestyle and requirements of each stage. For instance, a development targeted towards families with children might demand a larger house and prioritize proximity to schools and parks, while housing for retirees might focus on smaller residential unit size and prioritize accessibility and amenities conducive to active aging. The concept acknowledges that housing needs evolve over time and seeks to offer options that align with these changing circumstances.

- **Affordable housing:** Within the framework of life stage housing, affordable housing addresses the critical need for accessible and reasonably priced accommodation for individuals and families with limited financial resources. It aims to ensure that people, regardless of income level, can secure safe and comfortable homes suitable for their current life stage.
- **Workforce housing:** Workforce housing is an integral component of life stage housing, catering to individuals and families who are part of the local workforce. This type of housing is designed to be affordable for those with moderate incomes, such as teachers, nurses, firefighters, and other essential workers. It recognizes the importance of providing housing options that enable these individuals to live close to their places of employment and contribute to the vitality of their communities.
- **Special needs housing:** Special needs housing addresses the unique requirements of individuals with disabilities, chronic illnesses, or other specific needs. As part of the life stage housing paradigm, special needs housing aims to provide accessible, supportive, and inclusive living environments that empower residents to lead fulfilling and independent lives. This may include features such as wheelchair accessibility, sensory accommodations, and on-site support services tailored to the needs of residents.

In summary, Life Stage Housing includes a spectrum of residential options tailored to meet the diverse needs and circumstances of individuals and families across various stages of life. Components of Life Stage Housing include, but is not limited to, affordable housing, workforce housing, and special needs housing, as determined by data from various reliable sources such as

the American Community Survey, and the Shimberg Center for Housing Studies. Life Stage Housing recognizing the importance of providing diverse housing options that accommodate individuals and families at different stages of life while promoting inclusivity, affordability, and community well-being.

### **GOAL 3.1: PROVISION OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

#### **Promote housing options for all income levels.**


**FINDING:** The cornerstone of a City’s quality of life is its housing stock. Citizens of all income levels desire safe, secure, high-quality housing at a reasonable cost. Although the provision of housing is largely a function of the private sector and non-profit community housing corporations, the public sector plays a role in helping to ensure that the housing needs of all citizens are met by attempting to balance the cost of housing with income levels in the community. Affordable and workforce housing are terms often used in today’s industry. Affordability is defined by Florida Statute as housing where monthly rents or mortgage payments, inclusive of taxes and insurance, do not exceed 30% of a household’s median annual gross income adjusted for family size within the Palm Coast Metropolitan Statistical Area. Households in need of affordable housing are classified in the following income ranges:

- “moderate income” households can earn up to 120% of median income adjusted for family size
- “low income” households can earn up to 80%
- “very low income” households can earn up to 50%
- “extremely low income” households can earn up to 30%

Of the total number of households in the City, approximately 22.4% of owner-occupied dwellings are cost burdened, while nearly 50% of renter-occupied dwellings are cost burdened. According to 2023 HUD figures, the median household income for a family of four in the City of Palm Coast is \$82,700. This means a household of this size can earn a total annual gross income of \$99,240 to be classified as moderate income, \$66,160 to be classified as low income, \$43,600 to be classified as very low income and \$26,120 to be classified as extremely low income. Thus, the term “low-income housing” in Palm Coast might mean a household living in a \$185,000 single family home or a \$1,113 per month apartment or duplex is cost burdened. Although there may be governmental subsidies involved, “low-income housing” is now provided mainly through the private sector. This term should not be confused with government owned, built, and operated housing units or government housing projects.

This Element is written not only to meet State regulatory requirements, but also to express the City’s intent to work with the public and private sector to identify and implement strategies which support housing opportunities for residents of all income levels and life stages. This support takes the form of expanding permitted housing types within the City, ensuring the construction of high-quality and safe residential structures, and increasing opportunities for affordable housing development through a combination of grants and incentives.

### **Objective 3.1.1 – Adequate and Affordable Housing Opportunities**

Support the construction of adequate and affordable housing by providing opportunities that accommodate the housing needs of existing and future residents of households classified as extremely low, very low, low, and moderate income through a variety of mechanisms and development incentives. 

**Policy 3.1.1.1** – The City shall facilitate the development of residential and mixed use communities which allow for a range of complementary housing types and densities while also maintaining compatibility with Palm Coast's development pattern and character.

**Policy 3.1.1.2** – Promote the dispersal of affordable housing throughout the City in order to avoid over-concentration in any single area.

**Policy 3.1.1.3** – Provide technical assistance to housing developers by identifying sites for affordable housing targeted for very low-, low-, and moderate-income households. Potential sites shall be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- A. Availability of existing or planned roads and central utilities;
- B. Proximity of existing or planned schools, parks, and other public facilities;
- C. Proximity of existing or planned employment centers; and
- D. Proximity to grocery stores and medical facilities.

**Policy 3.1.1.4** – Provide in-kind services, when appropriate, to assist non-profit organizations in their efforts to construct homes for very low-, low-, and moderate-income households.

**Policy 3.1.1.5** – The City shall collaborate with architects, designers and other housing providers to encourage the innovative design of affordable housing.

**Policy 3.1.1.6** – The City may include innovative development alternatives in the Land Development Code (LDC) to promote attainable housing within the community. Potential actions may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- A. Allowance of “missing middle” housing in single family zoning districts. Missing middle housing considers attached dwellings with stipulations that the overall structure keep the appearance and/or scale of a single family home for compatibility with the existing neighborhood;
- B. Expedited site plan review and permitting;
- C. Innovative land development regulations established through zoning districts or through Master Planned Developments (MPDs);
- D. Creative design to reduce construction costs; and
- E. Other regulations intended to reduce building and development costs.

**Policy 3.1.1.7** - The City of Palm Coast will conduct a housing needs assessment to improve and diversify housing options. The study will consider “Life Stage Housing” needs and explore various strategies related to design, ownership, construction, incentives, and regulatory requirements. The study shall consider Palm Coast’s unique characteristics and assess impacts on infrastructure and community character. Recommendations may guide updates to the Housing Element, Land Development Code, and related policies to ensure the diversity and adequacy of housing supply.

### **Objective 3.1.2 – State and Federal Funding to Implement Housing Programs**

Seek funding from Federal and State housing and community development sources to formulate and establish housing implementation programs. 🏠

**Policy 3.1.2.1** – Support extremely low-, very low-, low-, and moderate-income residents with home ownership using funding from the SHIP program or other available housing programs.

**Policy 3.1.2.2** – Provide local support to developers seeking tax credits administered by the Florida Housing Finance Corporation to construct affordable multi-family projects. Support may be provided through a variety of mechanisms, including, but not limited to financial contributions (using non-local sources of funding, i.e. state and federal programs), expedited plan review and permitting, and density bonuses with a cap determined through the development of a comprehensive incentive program.

**Policy 3.1.2.3** – Through the Local Housing Assistance Plan and interlocal agreement with Flagler County, continue to work with the County to use SHIP monies or other available funding to support the development of affordable multi-family units in the City.

**Policy 3.1.2.4** – Continue operation of the Palm Coast Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Housing Program. CDBG funds shall be used to assist residents with projects that benefit low- and moderate-income persons; prevent or eliminate slums or blight; or meet other urgent community development needs.

**Policy 3.1.2.5** – In addition to CDBG and SHIP funds, evaluate other potential sources of affordable housing funding.

**Policy 3.1.2.6** – Participate with the County and neighboring cities to pursue joint affordable housing funding if the opportunity arises.

## GOAL 3.2: SPECIAL NEEDS HOUSING

### **Households with special needs shall be integrated into and dispersed throughout residential areas.**

**FINDING:** Public sector assistance is typically required to provide housing to accommodate populations with special needs, including the elderly, handicapped, and single parent households. State regulations are very specific in ensuring populations with special needs are not discriminated against by requiring local governments to treat small group homes as single-family units subject to certain distance requirements to avoid over concentrations in any one area.

Based upon its demographics, the City faces a major need to address housing for the elderly. According to figures from the 2022 American Community Survey, approximately 30% of the City's population is 65 years of age or older and nearly half of the City's households have at least one individual in this age category. Updated figures from the Shimberg Center for Housing Studies indicate that the elderly population will again start to increase as a percentage of the city's population over the planning horizon. Elderly residents more often need special housing assistance and group home facilities that will enable them to age-in-place. For elderly and handicapped persons utilizing in-home day care services, there will be an increased demand for downsized, barrier-free dwellings (i.e. apartments, condos, or single-family homes on smaller lots). Others may opt to move to a congregate care or an assisted living facility. A continuum of care facility, which allows residents to age-in-place in a variety of housing types within the same development site is a concept which has received much support.

The role of local government in providing housing assistance for special needs households is supported in the following objectives and policies. State comprehensive planning requirements extend into areas that may not be as pertinent in the City as compared to other places in the State. For example, the analysis indicates that farm worker housing is not a need within the City. Outside the City, but within the boundaries of the Palm Coast Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), there are numerous resources offered for homeless persons in the form of support services and institutions. The use of available pertinent data shall drive the actions and decisions made on housing policy.

#### **Objective 3.2.1 – Housing Sites for Special Needs Groups**

Support community residential homes within residential areas and areas of mixed-use developments.



**Policy 3.2.1.1** – Uphold the siting requirements consistent with the provisions of Chapter 419, F.S., for community residential homes.

**Policy 3.2.1.2** – To promote the availability of housing for special needs persons, seek opportunities to partner with agencies that provide housing assistance to persons of this demographic.

### **Objective 3.2.2 – Affordable Housing for Residents with Special Needs**

Provide adequate and affordable housing opportunities to accommodate households with special housing needs with an emphasis on provisions for the elderly. 🏠

**Policy 3.2.2.1** – Support the use of SHIP or CDBG funds, upon availability, to assist in the provision of special needs housing.

**Policy 3.2.2.2** – The City shall ensure that the Comprehensive Plan and the Land Development Code include one or more Future Land Use Categories and Zoning Districts which would allow the development of continuum of care facilities. These living environments allow residents to age-in-place and transition from single-family residential structures to assisted living and subsequently to a nursing home within the same development site.

**Policy 3.2.2.3** – The City shall consider the following principles and criteria for siting households with special housing needs:

- A. Availability of existing or planned roads and central utilities;
- B. Proximity of existing or planned schools, parks, and other public facilities;
- C. Proximity of existing or planned employment centers;
- D. Proximity to grocery stores and medical facilities;
- E. Proximity to bus routes; and
- F. Locations outside of the Coastal High Hazard Zone.

**Policy 3.2.2.4** – In order to coordinate the provision of an adequate housing supply for special needs persons, collaborate with the private sector and non-profit providers in the siting of housing for individuals with special needs. Such housing includes group homes, foster care housing, and shelters for the homeless. Individuals who are considered frail elderly, victims of domestic violence, and physically or mentally challenged are considered special needs.

**Policy 3.2.2.5** – Participate in the efforts of the Volusia-Flagler Coalition for the Homeless and other non-profit private agencies in the development of transitional housing for the homeless.

## **GOAL 3.3: MAINTAIN THE EXISTING HOUSING STOCK AND PROTECT RESIDENTIAL AREAS**

### **To protect, maintain, rehabilitate, and improve City's housing stock.**

**FINDING:** As the City's housing stock continues to age, more and more challenges in maintaining the quality and livability of the housing stock will occur. Approximately 55% of the dwelling units were built since 2000, with only about 1% built prior to 1970. The number of the City's dwelling units are currently classified as "substandard" comprises less than 1% of the City's overall housing stock. It is the City's challenge to bring stability to neighborhoods by enforcing property standards and participating in federal and state programs to assist households in maintaining their homes up to the current code. Currently, residents who qualify may tap into the City's CDBG program or the County's SHIP program for financial assistance in maintaining their owner-occupied dwelling unit. This goal, which works hand-in-hand with broader neighborhood preservation efforts, can be accomplished through a variety of means including strict enforcement of building and maintenance codes. In particular, there is a need to place special emphasis on regulations intended to ensure that landlords maintain rental units. Several options are discussed in the following objectives and policies.

#### **Objective 3.3.1 – Protect the Existing Housing Stock.**

Conserve, maintain, and improve existing housing stock and eliminate substandard housing conditions through code provisions and incentive programs to require and/or assist builders, private homeowners, and landlords when making structural and aesthetic improvements.




**Policy 3.3.1.2** – Continue permitting and inspection efforts pertaining to property rental and landlord circumstances.

**Policy 3.3.1.3** – To promote high quality housing, enforce architectural and aesthetic regulations. These regulations shall be reviewed on a continual basis and updated as needed.

**Policy 3.3.1.4** – Support the use of SHIP, or CDBG funds, or other available funding sources and programs, to assist in the elimination of substandard housing conditions and to make structural and aesthetic improvements.

#### **Objective 3.3.2 – Protect Residential Areas from Incompatible Land Uses**

Protect predominantly residential areas from the intrusion of incompatible or more intensive land uses. 

**Policy 3.3.2.1** – Evaluate the LDC to include development standards that provide greater setback and buffering requirements between established residential areas and non-residential uses to provide additional compatibility measures between uses. The Florida statutory definition of "compatibility" in §163.3164 shall be utilized for the purpose of implementing this Plan.

**Policy 3.3.2.2** – Reevaluate neighborhood compatibility criteria which shall be utilized by the City to review applications for Future Land Use Map amendments, rezonings, and special



exceptions to ensure that proposed land uses and development proposed in close proximity to existing residential homes or neighborhoods do not adversely impact the residential areas.

**Policy 3.3.2.3** – No residential lot in a recorded, platted subdivision shall be used for non-residential purposes except as permitted in State statutes (Such as Home Businesses).

**Policy 3.3.2.4** – An analysis of compatibility is required when a new non-residential use is proposed to locate next to existing residential uses. Compatibility analyses during Land Use Amendments, Zoning Amendments, or Site Plan applications may include, but are not limited to, review of the following circumstances and attributes of the new development in comparison to the existing development pattern within a 500 foot vicinity of the parcel boundary of the subject parcel proposed for development or redevelopment:

- a. A comparison of lot sizes, intensity, and/or density to understand potential trip generation of the new use.
- b. Location in proximity of a collector or arterial roadway, or a transit stop to determine vehicle miles traveled of the new development that may impact existing residential uses.
- c. A comparison of the scale of the building envelope(s) including floor area ratio and height.
- d. Locations of ingress and egress, and whether or not there are multiple alternate roadways for access to the new development.
- e. Hours of operation of a non-residential use.
- f. Any creation of noise, smoke, glare, fumes, aromas, or other potential nuisance generating activities.
- g. Installation of vegetative buffers, and setback provisions provided with the plan for development.
- h. Any nuisance abatement provisions of the new development.

## GOAL 3.4: DIVERSITY IN HOUSING

### **Allow a variety of lot sizes and housing types to meet the needs of the citizenry through all stages of life.**

**FINDING:** As discussed in the Future Land Use Element’s objectives and policies, the City has an over abundance of ¼-acre platted single-family lots. There is a need for different sized lots and different types of housing, including mid-density and higher-density attached housing options to meet the needs of the expanding and diversifying population.

Florida Law requires the City to provide adequate sites and locational criteria for mobile/manufactured homes. Modular homes are defined in Florida Law differently than mobile/manufactured homes. Modular homes are considered conventionally built homes and fall under the Florida Building Code, installed on a permanent foundation.

Mobile/manufactured homes bear a Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) seal. Florida Law prohibits manufactured housing to be treated separately from a conventionally built home.

As previously presented in the summary to this element, the City wants to emphasize the importance of a housing supply that recognizes the “life stage” of its current and future residents. “Life Stage” housing recognizes that housing availability encompasses a spectrum of residential options tailored to meet the diverse needs and circumstances of individuals and families across various stages of life. These stages may range from young families starting out on their own, couples with no children, all the way to “empty-nesters” or couples whose children have moved out on their own. Beyond particular housing types, the concept of “life stage” recognizes the need for the availability and affordability of housing as determined by the “life stage” of a household/family. Provide a diverse range of housing options that accommodate the evolving needs and preferences of residents throughout all stages of life.

#### **Objective 3.4.1 – Ensure Accessible Housing for All Life Stages**

**Policy 3.4.1.1** – Through the FLUM and the zoning district regulations of the LDC, the City shall make provisions to supply land that can be developed with various types of housing at varying densities. In doing so, this effort creates housing opportunities that are suitable for differing incomes, ages and life stages.

**Policy 3.4.1.2** – Recognizing that many older adults prefer to reside in their current homes or community for as long as possible, increase opportunities for appropriate and affordable housing ideally in close proximity to uses providing essential needs. Allow such housing opportunities to occur within walking distance for the benefit of all stages of life, commonly referred to as “aging in place”.

**Policy 3.4.1.3** – Work toward achieving the Department of Elder Affairs Livable Community designation, achieving the framework for the provision of affordable housing and other foundational built environment standards to sustain aging in place. Housing principles to achieve include:


- a. Affordable housing to people of all income levels.

- b. Equitable access to affordable housing.
- c. A range of high-quality housing options.
- d. Accessible access to housing and destinations for essential needs.
- e. Safe housing and lifestyle conditions.

**Policy 3.4.1.4** – Promote the use of Universal Design principles to ensure accessibility and inclusivity to meet the life stage needs of all residents.

**Policy 3.4.1.5** – The City will explore ways to integrate solar energy into both new and existing developments and examine incentives and grants to promote solar energy, work with stakeholders, and update potential regulations to streamline installations.

### **Objective 3.4.2 – Adequate Sites for Approved Mobile Homes and Manufactured Buildings**

Provide adequate sites for residential mobile homes and manufactured buildings that bear the HUD approval label . 

**Policy 3.4.2.1** – Provided that architectural and aesthetic regulations are met, manufactured buildings, which bear the DEO approval insignia, may be constructed in any residential zoning district where conventional, site-built dwellings are permitted.

**Policy 3.4.2.2** – Establish a mobile/manufactured home (bearing the HUD approval insignia) zoning district, which is not subject to the same architectural and aesthetic regulations as applied in the City’s other residential zoning districts. The City’s LDC shall provide that lawfully existing mobile homes may be allowed, subject to conditions, to continue as non-conforming uses.

**Policy 3.4.2.3** – The following principles and criteria for siting the zoning districts in which mobile homes and/or residential manufactured buildings are permitted shall include:

- A. Availability of existing or planned roads and central utilities;
- B. Adequate buffering from proximate residential uses;
- C. Adequate buffering from rights-of-way; and
- D. Located outside of the Coastal High Hazard Zone.

**Policy 3.4.2.4** – The City shall develop Land Development Code regulations that establish clear and comprehensive development standards for mobile home and manufactured home Zoning District. These regulations shall include, but not be limited to, the following areas:

- A. Landscape requirements including provisions for native vegetation, tree preservation, and irrigation.
- B. Setback Requirements.
- C. Parking regulations.
- D. Provisions for Stormwater Management.
- E. Community amenities and public spaces.