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Municipality:	County of Beaufort
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Community Type – applicable to:	Urban; Suburban; Rural
Title:	County of Beaufort Comprehensive Plan – Affordable Housing Policy
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Abstract

The Comprehensive Plan of the County offers a complete summation on the need for affordable housing and the problems that accompany implementation. The plan contains several policies to facilitate an effective affordable housing program. The recommendations include: creating public/private/community consensus, the leveraging of resources and the encouragement of a variety of housing types. Policy Five suggests using high-density residential prototypes, expedited review and approval, and targeted financial incentives.

Resource

INCENTIVES FOR THE PRIVATE SECTOR

Policy 5: Foster a variety of affordable housing opportunities near or convenient to job centers and community facilities.

Part of the challenge of affordable housing involves commuting distance to work--whether it be a military service member being unable to find affordable housing close to the base, or a Hilton Head employee who cannot afford to live there or even nearby. To help address community distance as well as traffic and sprawl development patterns, affordable housing should be promoted in areas convenient to major employment centers (the County's military installations, Hilton Head or the City of Beaufort), and along major routes providing vehicular and public transportation to these centers. Priority should be given to affordable housing in Priority Investment Areas, which will have greater access to public facilities and transportation.

Actions

5.1 Investigate and consider higher-density residential prototypes in connection with affordable housing, but consistent with the Future Land Use framework.

While development in Beaufort County probably will continue to remain largely single-family homes (based on both market factors and the County-wide sentiment to avoid high-density growth), nearly 50 percent of the resident survey respondents still indicated that town-house development should be encouraged. Thus, in Priority Investment Areas where suitable site-specific conditions exist (i.e., negative impact on scenic views, traffic conditions, water and sewer, etc.), the County should consider more affordable, multi-family housing prototypes. The Affordable Housing Task Force could assist with such determinations.

5.2 Target expedited review and approval to developers of affordable housing projects with sites and building programs consistent with all of the planning, aesthetic and environmental considerations raised in this plan and located in Priority Investment Areas.

For developers, lengthy review and approval processes translate into increased costs. They must continue to pay carrying costs on land even if they are not able to develop it due to pending zoning or permitting approvals. Thus, if the County were to try to prioritize permitting, County Council approvals and other required regulatory approvals (obviously within the legal authority to do so) for qualified projects in development areas, it would remove some of delays and could encourage more developers to include an affordable housing component in their projects. (As noted, the Affordable Housing Coordinator and Task Force would both play key roles in expediting projects.)

5.3 Target financing and other incentives for the private market to create and maintain affordable housing in designated areas.

These could include areas close to employment centers, military bases and sites along major public transportation routes, but always for areas where the infrastructure can support added densities and consistent with the Future Land Use framework. The precise financing and incentives will, as noted, vary widely from year to year, depending on changes in State and Federal programs and legislation.