

Attainable Housing In Coral Gables



CITY OF CORAL GABLES, FLORIDA
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ATTAINABLE HOUSING IN CORAL GABLES

❖ Introduction

When housing prices increase faster than income, where do workers live? Increasingly, Florida communities and businesses are expressing concern about a shortage of attainable housing: apartments and houses that are affordable for workers in low and moderately paid jobs. Some characteristics of the attainable housing shortage:

- ❑ Communities have difficulty attracting and retaining qualified public servants, such as teachers, nurses, firefighters, and police officers, because there is little housing these employees can afford.
- ❑ New businesses may be reluctant to come to a community with limited attainable housing, and existing business may find it difficult to expand, add employees, or even remain in the community.
- ❑ Workers may face long, congested, and increasingly expensive commutes from outlying areas with more attainable housing to jobs located in cities with high housing costs.
- ❑ People with low-paying jobs, such as sales persons, secretaries, and home health aides, may have trouble finding *any* housing they can afford.
- ❑ Young professionals raised in more affluent communities can not afford to continue living there once they enter the workforce and move out on their own.
- ❑ Seniors looking to “downsize” can not afford to do so in their community, placing them at greater distances from the essential support of their doctors, friends, and family.



❖ What is Attainable Housing?

Attainable housing, also known as affordable and workforce housing, is a term used to describe residential units whose total housing costs are deemed "affordable" to a group of people within a specified income range. Although the term "affordable housing" is generally applied to rental housing for families in the lower income ranges, "attainable housing" is applicable to both renters and purchasers in all income ranges. In the City of Coral Gables, attainable housing generally applies to households earning up to 120% of the City's median area income (approximately \$93,000 annually).

According to the state and federal governments, housing is considered "affordable" if it costs no more than 30% of the monthly household income for mortgage payments or rent and utilities. For instance, a nurse with a household income of \$60,000 a year should pay no more than \$1,500 monthly for mortgage or rent and utilities. Accordingly, a sales person making \$12.00 an hour should be paying no more than \$624 dollars a month in rent and utilities.

As home prices rise, the gap between household income and supportable mortgages widens, making housing payments increasingly difficult for moderate income households. In a community where the median City income is nearly \$80,000 and the median home sales price exceeds \$350,000, many of the City's families, workforce, and seniors are unable find housing that is affordable.

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❖ Today's Attainable Housing



Unlike traditional affordable housing efforts in the nation that focused exclusively on the lowest income groups, today's attainable housing is increasingly focused on serving moderate income families, seniors, and young professionals. Attainable housing provides a stepping stone for recent graduates and young families, the ability for people in career or life transitions to re-build credit and capital, and a cost-effective living situation for seniors looking to downsize to homes that remain close to their doctors, friends, and family.

Attainable housing can be ownership or rental, single-family, duplex, or multi-family, and it can be located in an exclusive attainable housing community or a mixed-income community containing a variety of housing types and prices. It is required to be designed to fit the character of surrounding neighborhoods, with high-quality construction that meets and often exceeds local building standards and architectural/design requirements.

In short, attainable housing comes in as many shapes and forms as market-rate housing, and is built to the same exacting standards. The only difference is the price.

❖ History of Attainable Housing in Coral Gables

Historically, the City of Coral Gables has not actively promoted attainable housing within the City. This is in large part due to the City's unique socio-economic status as a largely affluent community, which disqualifies the City from popular federal and state affordable housing funding programs, such as Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) and State Housing Initiatives Partnership (SHIP) grants. Correspondingly, the City government does not house an attainable housing office or employ attainable housing professionals, unlike Miami-Dade County, and the cities of Miami, Hialeah, Miami Beach, and other larger municipalities with different socio-economic characteristics and needs.

Although the City does not qualify for federal and state affordable housing funding, every local government, including the City of Coral Gables, is required by the State of Florida's growth management laws to identify in its comprehensive plan the city's attainable housing needs, and promote strategies to address them. Accordingly, the City's Comprehensive Land Use Plan (CLUP) contains a Housing Element with various Goals, Objectives, and Policies related to attainable housing (see Planning Department [website](#) for CLUP). These policies, however, were never fully implemented and are largely outdated.

It was in the course of amending the CLUP Land Use Map in January 2004 that the issue of the City's compliance with attainable housing requirements was raised by the South Florida Regional Planning Council (SFRPC) and the State of Florida Department of Community Affairs (DCA), which are charged with reviewing and approving comprehensive plan amendments. The proposed map amendments were approved only after the City Commission adopted Resolution Nos. 2004-37 and 2004-158 committing the City to addressing its attainable housing needs. The review agencies underscored that the City would be prohibited from adopting future amendments to the CLUP unless attainable housing was satisfactorily addressed.

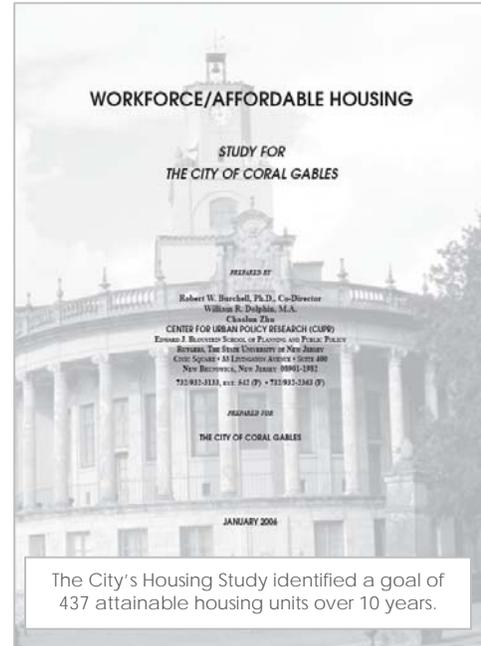
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❖ City Efforts to Address Attainable Housing

❑ Workforce/Affordable Housing Study

In furtherance of its stated commitment to address attainable housing, the City engaged a noted authority on attainable housing, Dr. Robert Burchell of Rutgers University, to produce a Workforce/Affordable Housing Study for the City of Coral Gables. Completed in January 2006, the Study identified the City's attainable housing needs and recommended strategies for addressing them, including inclusionary zoning and an attainable housing linkage fee.

The Study recommended the provision of 437 attainable housing units over 10 years for households at 80-120% of the City's median income (\$62,000 - \$93,000/year in 2005 dollars) to address the City's estimated need. The target of 437 units consists of (1) future need, (2) current rehabilitation need, (3) preservation need, and (4) backlog need, and represents a small percentage of the City's total actual need of 2,442 units. The Study in its entirety is available for download on the Planning Department [website](#).



At 120% of median income, the maximum sales price of an attainable unit would be \$234,140, and the maximum rental rate would be \$2,341. These numbers will naturally have to be adjusted to reflect current data. The completed study was presented to the City Commission on January 24, 2006, and to the Planning and Zoning Board and SFRPC on January 25, 2006 (see Planning Department [website](#) for presentation and minutes).

❑ Strategies

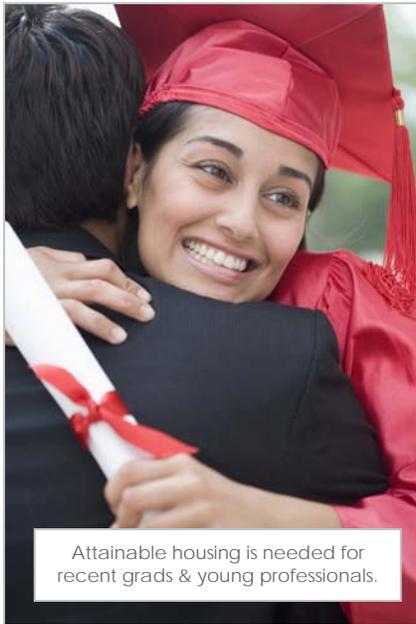
Based on the findings and recommendations of the Affordable/Workforce Housing Study, the City Commission then adopted Resolution No. 2006-44 in support of a three-pronged approach to addressing the City's needs, including inclusionary zoning, an attainable housing fee, and the exploration of other federal, state, and regional opportunities.

Staff then developed draft attainable housing zoning regulations that would have required certain developments to set-aside a percentage of their units for attainable housing for persons at 80-120% of City median income (for teachers, nurses, police, firefighters, young professionals, seniors, etc.). The draft regulations were presented to the Planning & Zoning Board for discussion in May 2006 (see Planning Department [website](#) for minutes), upon which it was decided that the issue would be better addressed as part of the CLUP rewrite.

This issue was again thoroughly addressed as part of the City's adopted CLUP Evaluation and Appraisal Report (see Planning Department [website](#) for EAR), which provides a foundation for the subsequent EAR-based amendments (i.e., CLUP rewrite) currently in progress.

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▣ Projects



In the meantime, in order to take advantage of the few remaining redevelopment opportunities for which attainable housing could be provided, Staff began to require that developers undergoing discretionary public hearing reviews address attainable housing on a case-by-case basis via monetary contributions or the provision of attainable housing units as a percentage of a project. Projects that have contributed to the City's attainable housing efforts thus far include Village Place, Old Spanish Village, and Gables Gateway, with a total of 57 units and \$120,000 proffered to date.

Units set aside for attainable housing must be priced at a level that is affordable to people at 80-120% of median income (between \$62,000 - \$93,000 annually), and must be designed to normal development standards, including size, design, parking, etc. The only incentive that has been offered in exchange for attainable housing has been expedited building permit review. No development bonuses, including height, density, intensity, or parking, have been provided.

❖ What's Next?

City staff is currently working on developing attainable housing goals, objectives, and policies as part of CLUP rewrite, to include associated Zoning Code regulations as applicable. This effort includes the identification of potential public, non-profit and/or private partners who could assist the City in administering and implementing its attainable housing programs. Draft policies and regulations will be presented to the Planning and Zoning Board and City Commission in the coming months as part of the CLUP rewrite.



❖ Resources & Contacts

For more information regarding the City of Coral Gables' attainable housing efforts, please visit our website at: www.coralgables.com/CGWeb/dep_plan_housing.htm.

Questions, comments? Please contact the City's Planning Department, as provided below:

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