

Affordable Housing Conditions, Needs and Recommended Practices for the Local Jurisdiction, Riviera Beach, Florida

Overview

This brief study identifies the affordable housing stock and impoverished community statistics in the City of Riviera Beach. This study also recommends short term and long term best practices that the city leaders can utilize in order to meet the affordable housing needs for its residents.

The conclusion of this study identifies that there is a deficit of affordable housing in the City of Riviera Beach and that changes in municipal policy are warranted in order to address this issue.

Population Statistics

As of July 2016, the City of Riviera Beach, FL had a population of 34,244 (1). Approximately 23.6% of Riviera Beach's population (approximately 7,610 persons) were identified as impoverished (2).

Affordable Housing Stock Statistics

There are currently six existing low-income housing apartment complexes in the City of Riviera Beach, containing roughly 915 affordable apartment units (3). According to the Riviera Beach Housing Authority there are no public housing units available; nor does the Riviera Beach Housing Authority manage a Section 8 Housing Assistance Program (4).

Based on population and housing stock statistics there are approximately 915 apartment units, serving eligible low income persons, for over 7,600 impoverished persons in Riviera Beach. This equates to this community having only the amount affordable housing units for 12% of this population.

Alternatively, assuming that a portion of the impoverished population of 7,600 are related and can be classified as "Impoverish Families" (which would be defined as multiple, related individuals, including inter-generational family members, all who qualify as impoverished); and, for discussion purposes, assuming that the average Impoverished Family has four persons in the household, this scenario would result in 1,900 Impoverished Families in Riviera Beach that would need affordable rental housing. Based on the amount of known multi-family affordable housing in Riviera Beach, over 50% of Impoverished Families would be without affordable housing.

Conclusion

Based on the lack of supply of affordable housing product and the age and condition of some of the existing multi-family affordable housing stock, it is recommended that the City of Riviera Beach identify and implement short term and long term municipal policies to cause the construction of new affordable housing and the rehabilitation of the existing, older, affordable housing complexes.

(1) source: US Census Bureau, www.census.gov/quickfacts

(2) source: US Census Bureau, www.census.gov/quickfacts; The Census Bureau defines poverty utilizing the U.S. Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) Statistical Policy Directive 14. The Census Bureau uses a set of money income thresholds that vary by family size and composition to determine who is in poverty. If a family's total income is less than the family's threshold, then that family and every individual in it is considered in poverty. The official poverty thresholds do not vary geographically, but they are updated for inflation using Consumer Price Index (CPI-U). The official poverty definition uses money income before taxes and does not include capital gains or noncash benefits (such as public housing, Medicaid, and food stamps). More information on this process can be found at the following link: <https://www.census.gov/topics/income-poverty/poverty/guidance/poverty-measures.html>.

(3) source: [affordable housing online.com](http://affordablehousingonline.com). The properties identified with low income housing units are: Stonybrook Apartments with 216 units, Villa Franciscan with 85 units, Mystic Woods Ph I and Ph II with 162 units, Indian Trace Apartments with 330 units and 1600 W.16th St. with 122 units.

(4) Per telephone discussion with John W. Hurt, Executive Director of the Riviera Beach Housing Authority, on February 7, 2018. It was mentioned that another 180 of affordable rental units are being planned and developed by the Housing Authority and the Housing Trust Group, LLC.

Best Practices Recommendations

From a policy perspective, it is important to know what's driving the challenges to housing development and redevelopment which impacts the affordability of the housing product. If affordable housing options are decreasing or not growing to meet the needs of a community, it could be due to, among other things: rising development costs, local government restrictions, rising construction and material costs.

Options that local governments can explore as immediate remedies would involve differentiating zoning and building requirements for market rate developments versus affordable housing developments. Further local governments should explore differentiating requirements of affordable rehabilitation projects from the new construction of affordable housing developments. Examples of such immediate remedies include:

- Streamline the review and permitting processes to reduce time and cost to the applicants
- Relax zoning requirements for affordable housing projects, particularly where market demand zoning requirements would not be applicable. This would reduce timely variance hearings and costs to the projects.

To address the significant shortfall of available affordable housing in a community, long-term planning, policy determinations and program implementation must occur at the local governmental level. Depending upon a city's unique demographic, cultural needs, and political context, planners should identify policies unique to that community and identify the available resources in order to ensure the success of any program.

Immediate Term Remedies for Affordable Housing

- Streamlining plans reviews and reducing fees (5)
 - Allowing for 3rd party plans review by eligible, independent engineering firms in order to increase review and approval timing.
 - Eliminating building permit fees for entities utilizing 3rd party plans reviewers
- Relaxing zoning requirements for affordable housing rehabilitation projects (5)
 - Reduced parking space requirement for new construction projects at a one space per unit requirement
 - Reduced parking space requirement for rehabilitation of existing affordable housing project, where no additional residential units are being added. An existing housing project undergoing a substantial rehabilitation, which is grandfathered into the current municipal zoning code as "legal non-conforming," should not be required to add any additional parking spaces.

Long Term Remedies

- Identify areas within the community, where public transportation and access to healthy food markets, education and community services are easily attainable.
- Identify areas where elderly services and disability assistance along with family needs and child care assistance are needed.
- Establish Community Operated Land Banks – which addresses the high cost of land prices and allows for planning and implementation of affordable housing. (5)
 - Create Neighborhood-Zoned Tax Increment Financing Districts (5)

(5) *The Urban Institute*, "Miami and the State of Low- and Middle-Income Housing, March 2017.
<https://www.urban.org/research/publication/miami-and-state-low-and-middle-income-housing>