Chapter Seven, Housing Element
City of St. Petersburg Comprehensive Plan

HOUSING ELEMENT

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7.1  INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the Housing Element is to provide guidance to the City of St. Petersburg in developing appropriate plans and policies which demonstrate the City's commitment to meet identified and projected deficits in the supply of housing. In addition, this element intends to develop alternative housing policies and strategies for coordinating a wide range of public and private sector programs to meet the City's current and future housing needs.

7.2  GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

GOAL - HOUSING (H):

To facilitate the provision of decent, safe, sanitary, healthy and affordable housing in suitable neighborhoods at affordable costs to meet the needs of the present and future residents of the city, while preserving and enhancing the community's physical and social fabric, and cultural diversity, and while protecting the interests of special needs groups, and extremely low, very low, low, and moderate-income households.

ISSUE: Housing Quantity

The City has identified housing needs for the residents of St. Petersburg for the planning period covered in this plan. However, due to affordability issues and a scarcity of residentially zoned vacant land, the City must diligently work with the private sector and provide sufficient incentives to encourage the delivery of the varied housing residents need.
OBJECTIVE H1:

The City shall provide technical and financial assistance to the private sector to provide dwelling units of various types, sizes and costs to meet the affordable housing needs of existing and future populations of the city, including those participating in the Working to Improve Our Neighborhoods (W.I.N) program.

Policies:

H1.1 Provide information, technical assistance, and incentives to the private sector to maintain a housing production capacity sufficient to meet the required production.

H1.2 Develop working relationships with the private sector to improve the efficiency and expand the capacity of the housing delivery system.

H1.3 Review ordinances, codes, regulations and the permitting process for the purpose of eliminating excessive and overlapping requirements and resolving conflicting requirements, and amending or adding other requirements in order to increase private sector participation in meeting housing needs, while continuing to insure the health, welfare and safety of the residents.

H1.4 The City shall monitor the use of the Workforce Housing Density/Intensity Bonus Ordinance to ensure that affordable workforce housing units are produced.

H1.5 The City shall pursue an amendment to the Pinellas County Transportation Impact Fee Ordinance to reduce the impact fee for affordable housing projects.

H1.6 The City shall triennially through the efforts of the State Housing Initiatives Partnership Affordable Housing Advisory Committee review its development regulations to develop a variety of incentives to allow and encourage housing for extremely low, very low, low, and moderate income households.

H1.7 The City shall continue to participate in the W.I.N. Program with local lending institutions to offer low interest loans to extremely low, very low, low and moderate income families to rehabilitate and upgrade substandard homes.

H1.8 The City shall use its Affordable Housing Programs to encourage the rehabilitation of older housing stock into affordable housing.

H1.9 The City shall consider stimulating the development of affordable housing by converting vacant and underutilized city-owned property into surplus property, and making appropriate surplus inventory available for the development of affordable housing.

H1.10 The City shall provide information to the public about affordable housing, on its website, in brochures or through public presentations.
OBJECTIVE H2:

The City shall develop ongoing programs to eliminate approximately 400 substandard housing units per year.

Policies:

H2.1 Increase code compliance and assistance activities through regular annual inspections of the housing stock in neighborhoods where code violations are more prevalent and in Neighborhood Partnership Program target areas and institute special concentrated code compliance and assistance activities where warranted.

H2.2 Seek federal and state funding, or otherwise provide local public funds for the demolition or rehabilitation of substandard housing.

H2.3 Assist neighborhood upgrading projects city-wide but especially in Neighborhood Partnership Program areas by providing code compliance and assistance, removing blighting influences, and concentrating improvements in such neighborhoods.

H2.4 Utilize the city-wide code compliance and assistance programs to cleanup the City's neighborhoods.

ISSUE: Extremely Low, Very Low, Low and Moderate Income Housing

Based on the housing analysis, the City has an unmet housing need for extremely low, very low, low and moderate income households. Due to a number of economic constraints, the private sector has not responded to the needs of this segment of our population. Strategies, programs and incentives have been implemented to assist the private sector in responding to this particular need.

OBJECTIVE H3A:

The City shall ensure that affordable housing for extremely low, very low, low, and moderate-income households, including households with special needs, is available to 35% of the new households forecasted by 2010. These units may be provided by natural filtration, rehabilitation programs, subsidies, new construction or other assistance programs by the private and public sectors.

OBJECTIVE H3B:

The City shall provide affordable housing incentives (such as revised Land Development Regulations and expedited permitting processing) to developers of affordable housing for the extremely low, very low and low income groups (see Policy H1.7).
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Policies:

H3.1 The City shall support the efforts of the Housing Authority of the City of St. Petersburg and assist in their efforts to determine and develop sites and programs for housing for extremely low, very low, low, and moderate income persons. This assistance will include technical assistance to locate vacant residential land throughout the City; providing zoning, demographic, infrastructure and public facility information; and technical analysis for meeting the Housing Authority's criteria.

H3.2 Distribute publicly assisted housing equitably throughout the City to provide for a wide variety of neighborhood settings for extremely low, very low, low, and moderate income persons and to avoid undue concentrations in single neighborhoods.

H3.3 Encourage the formation and participate in a region-wide fair share housing distribution plan.

H3.4 Participate with the Pinellas County Housing Finance Authority in the use of bond funded and state "affordable housing" assistance loans and grants.

H3.5 Pursue federal sources of funding earmarked for extremely low, very low, low, and moderate income housing, and allocate a portion of the federal funds for the rehabilitation of such housing.

H3.6 The City shall support and participate in the Low Income Housing Network to assess, on a regular basis, extremely low, very low, low, and moderate income housing needs and recommend programs that should be instituted to facilitate and implement the City's Housing Goals, Objectives and Policies.

H3.7 The City shall consider the donation of excess City-owned, residentially zoned properties and in-fill lots to non-profit organizations that renovate or construct extremely low, very low, and low income households, such as Habitat for Humanity, Neighborhood Housing Services, Genesis and others.

H3.8 All residential districts designated by the land use plan and zoning map shall permit development of affordable housing for extremely low, very low, low, and moderate income households, preferably in developments containing units affordable to a range of income groups.

H3.9 The City shall continue to provide technical assistance to the private sector and the Housing Authority of the City of St. Petersburg in their programs to identify additional adequate sites for housing for extremely low, very low, low, and moderate income persons.

H3.10 All residential districts designated by the land use plan and zoning map shall permit development of manufactured homes that must be compatible with surrounding development and meet applicable building code regulations.
H3.11 Modify the impact fee requirements, including reduction or waiver of fees, and alternative methods of fee payment (a flat fee of $100 for permits in the target areas)[see Policy H1.5]

H3.12 The City will provide density bonuses to developers of affordable housing through the implementation of the Workforce Housing Denisty/Intensity Bonus Ordinance.

H3.13 The City shall continue to require departments to perform an affordable housing impact analysis prior to the adoption of any policies, procedures, ordinances, regulation and comprehensive plan amendments which could adversely affect the cost of affordable housing. The impact analysis shall answer the following questions:

A. Would an effect be to increase the cost of development (such as more landscaping, larger lot sizes, increased fees, require more infrastructure costs up front)?

B. Would an effect be to increase the time needed for development approvals?

C. Would an effect be to increase the long term cost of development (such as increased maintenance or building standards, or housing code changes)?

H3.14 The Real Estate and Property Management Department shall produce a printed inventory of local public lands available for affordable housing to be updated every three years.

H3.15 The City shall review the street widths and sidewalk requirements and the landscaping for vehicular use areas requirements to consider reduced requirements for qualified affordable housing projects by December 31, 2008 and every three years thereafter.

H3.16 The City will continue to coordinate its affordable housing lending policies with the Pinellas County Community Development Department to ensure the provision of extremely low, very low, low, and moderate income housing and continue to help provide this form of housing throughout the City. The City will continue to disseminate information regarding various Pinellas County housing assistance programs and help market them within St. Petersburg.

H3.17 The City will coordinate its plans to implement its affordable housing incentives program, including impact fee reductions or waivers or density bonuses, for example, with the Pinellas County Community Development Department for their use with the State Housing Incentives Program.

H3.18 The City shall triennially consider the adoption of affordable housing incentive strategies as specified in Section 420.9076, Florida Statutes, including the appointment of a committee to be known as the “Affordable Housing Advisory Committee.”

H3.19 The City shall work with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Florida Housing Coalition, 1000 Friends of Florida, the Florida Housing Finance Corporation and local government bodies to protect dedicated affordable housing
revenues as provided by the Housing and Community Development Department’s Consolidated Plan for housing, homelessness and non-housing community development needs (“Consolidated Plan”), and the Sadowski Act, and funded through the Federal, State and Local Government Housing Trust Funds.

H3.20 The City shall offer density bonuses to developers who include on-site housing for extremely low, very low, low, and moderate-income households, within mixed income developments that include housing priced at market rate.

ISSUE: Mobile Home Parks

The City has an estimated 4,110 mobile homes in 15 mobile home parks within the City boundaries. There is a capacity for additional mobile homes within the parks which are not filled to capacity.

OBJECTIVE H4:

The City shall allow new mobile homes in existing mobile home parks when vacancies exist and the City shall allow mobile homes to be developed on vacant mobile home park zoned land unless this policy conflicts with some other policy related to public health, safety, or welfare, e.g., the coastal high hazard area.

Policy:

H4.1 The City shall review and issue permits for mobile homes that meet the requirements of the building code and zoning ordinance, and other applicable regulations.

ISSUE: Group Homes - Special Needs Households

The City currently (2008) has many group homes and allows them in residentially zoned districts. The State of Florida Agency on Health Care Administration currently licenses 62 Adult Living Facilities (ALFs) with a capacity of 1,963 persons and 15 Adult Family Care Homes (AFCHs) with a capacity of 59 persons. The Agency for Persons with Disabilities licenses 15 group homes with a capacity of 110 persons in St. Petersburg. The Department of Children and Families licenses ten (10) Child Caring Agencies with 169 residents.

OBJECTIVE H5:

The City shall permit group homes in all residential districts in accordance with the standards and criteria defined in the Land Development Regulations.

Policies:

H5.1 Community-based residential care facilities licensed by the State of Florida Health Care Administration shall be permitted at convenient, adequate and non-isolated sites within the residential or institutional areas of the City, where there is adequate infrastructure;
provided they meet all the requirements of the Land Development Regulations, and are not within the Coastal High Hazard Area or susceptible to documented or anticipated flooding.

H5.2 The Development Services Department shall monitor the development and distribution of group homes and residential care facilities to insure that adequate sites and infrastructure are provided and that over-concentration in any residential area is avoided.

H5.3 The City, through its building permit process, shall ensure the compliance of housing projects with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Visitability Ordinance and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act requirements which prohibits discrimination against persons with disabilities.

ISSUE: Displacement/Relocation

As a result of infrastructure construction and expansion and as a result of development and redevelopment activities, residents may, from time to time, be displaced. Adequate relocation of these residents is necessary.

OBJECTIVE H6A:

The City shall utilize Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Notice CPD 88-33 guidelines and the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policy Act of 1970 for displacements, where federal funds are used.

OBJECTIVE H6B:

The City shall implement and enforce the provisions of the City’s Relocation Assistance Plan, where City funds are used.

Policies:

H6.1 Assure that reasonably located, standard housing at affordable costs is available to all persons displaced through public action prior to displacement.

H6.2 The City and Housing Authority of the City of St. Petersburg shall require that extremely low, very low and low income residents displaced by government action shall have first priority in obtaining public housing.

ISSUE: Historically Significant Housing

The City is fortunate to have historically significant housing and ordinances to protect appropriate structures. Additional historically significant housing may exist; therefore, it is important to provide technical assistance and education to those persons interested in designating historic housing.
OBJECTIVE H7:

Properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places or in the St. Petersburg Register of Historic Places shall be preserved and protected under the guidelines provided in the City's Historic and Archaeological Preservation Overlay. The City shall undertake efforts to identify and preserve historically significant buildings.

Policies:

H7.1 The City shall assist owners in the rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of historically significant housing by providing technical assistance and economic assistance programs such as property tax incentives, transfer of development rights, grants, and below-market interest rate loans.

H7.2 The City shall provide technical assistance to property owners of historically significant housing in applying for and utilizing state and federal assistance programs. The City shall also provide technical assistance in the completion of applications for local or National Register designation and other economic incentives provided for in the Land Development Regulations.

H7.3 To protect and preserve the City’s historically significant housing stock, the City shall incorporate policies in the Land Development Regulations which discourage the demolition of historic resources in districts which are listed, or eligible for listing, in the National Register of Historic Places or the St. Petersburg Register of Historic Places.

H7.4 The City shall provide technical assistance to the Community Preservation Commission in its efforts to provide public information, education and technical assistance relating to historic preservation programs.

H7.5 The City shall identify neighborhoods with a concentration of historic housing which may be eligible for designation in the National Register of Historic Places or the St. Petersburg Register of Historic Places. The City shall provide information concerning the benefits and requirements of designation to those neighborhoods.

Issue: Housing Conservation and Rehabilitation

The majority of the City’s housing stock is in sound condition requiring only minor maintenance. It is critical to ensure that the City’s housing remain in a sound condition. Strategies and programs need to be developed, implemented and coordinated to conserve and rehabilitate the City’s housing.

OBJECTIVE H8A:

The City shall help conserve and extend the useful life of the existing housing stock and shall continue to implement the neighborhood planning program and produce neighborhood plans on an ongoing basis.
OBJECTIVE H8B:

The useful life of the existing housing stock shall be conserved and extended, and neighborhood quality will be improved, by continued implementation of the Neighborhood Partnership Program, Working to Improve our Neighborhoods (W.I.N), the Certificate of Inspection Programs, and other programs.

Policies:

H8.1 The City shall review and amend where necessary the City housing and health codes and standards relating to the care and maintenance of residential and neighborhood environments and facilities.

H8.2 The City shall continue to schedule and concentrate public infrastructure and supporting facilities and services to upgrade the quality of all existing neighborhoods including those identified in City Council approved neighborhood plans and needs studies/assessments.

H8.3 The City shall encourage individual homeowners to increase private reinvestment in housing by providing information on technical and financial assistance program.

H8.4 The City shall implement the Certificate of Inspection (CI) Program in Neighborhood Partnership (target) areas and other appropriate areas of the City designated by City Council to maintain housing code compliance.

H8.5 The City shall support the efforts of Community Housing Development Organizations (CHDOs) and other affordable housing developers in their target areas by providing funding, technical assistance and coordination between City programs and CHDO services.

H8.6 The City shall continue funding the Community Services Coordinators or similar type efforts and implement the Neighborhood Partnership Grant Program to upgrade the City's neighborhoods.

H8.7 The City shall actively coordinate the Neighborhood Partnership Program with other initiatives to ensure maximum results in all programs.

H8.8 The City shall actively coordinate City Council-approved neighborhood plan recommendations with other initiatives to ensure maximum results in all programs.

ISSUE: Housing non-discrimination

The HUD-sponsored project R.E.A.C.H., which documented the incidence of housing discrimination in the Tampa Bay Region, indicated that south Pinellas County (St. Petersburg) had one of the lowest incidences of housing discrimination in the region.
OBJECTIVE H9:

The City's Housing and Community Development Department in coordination with the Human Resources Department shall assess existing public, private non-profit and for-profit housing programs and identify potential ways to further increase access to affordable standard housing for all citizens, regardless of race, sex, age, handicap, ethnic background, marital status, familial composition or income level and shall prepare periodic reports to the City Council with recommendations for programs and action to combat housing discrimination.

Policies:

H9.1 Institute new efforts at informing housing services agencies and the general public regarding fair housing rights and responsibilities.

H9.2 Research the extent of housing discrimination occurring against families with children as a protected class.

H9.3 Adhere to state and federal accessibility standards for barrier free multifamily living environments needed by physically handicapped persons.

H9.4 Encourage the private sector to provide additional multifamily living environments needed by physically handicapped persons.

H9.5 Continue to notify the Pinellas County Human Rights Office whenever housing discrimination is reported.

ISSUE: The Homeless

The numbers of homeless in the nation are increasing. In the past decade, entire families have found themselves homeless. Estimates on the numbers of homeless in a given area are not representative of all the homeless because of the constraints of the survey methodology and the inherent nature of homelessness. According to the Pinellas County Coalition for the Homeless, there were 5,195 homeless persons in Pinellas County in 2007. The local response must include the public sector and private and religious organizations. It is vital to coordinate the efforts of the existing service organizations.

OBJECTIVE H10:

The City shall implement the 5 Year Strategies contained in the adopted Consolidated Plan and work with the Pinellas Coalition of the Homeless to implement its 10-year plan to end homelessness, to provide housing and services for the homeless, promote transition to independence and prevent homelessness, including:

- Facilitating the rehabilitation/expansion of existing emergency, transitional and permanent supportive housing and facilities for the homeless to increase the capacity by 100 beds.
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- Facilitating the acquisition/rehabilitation of vacant properties for emergency, transitional and permanent supportive housing and facilities for the homeless by supporting the development of one homeless inebriate reception-recovery center.

- Supporting programs to provide support services to meet the basic needs of the homeless, including food and clothing, drop-in services, medical and mental health services, outreach, service coordination and advocacy and supporting the development of at least five new supportive transitional or permanent facilities for homeless families or persons with special needs.

- Supporting programs to promote the transition from homelessness to self-sufficiency and independence, including job and life skills training, child care and transportation services and housing assistance to 5,000 people per year, and promoting mixed-use supportive housing.

- Working with Catholic Charities to develop a 50-unit, 80-bed, permanent housing facility at Pinellas Hope for homeless persons.

Policies:

H10.1 The City shall actively maintain membership in the Pinellas County Coalition for the Homeless.

H10.2 The City shall coordinate the local civic and church organizations who feed and assist the City's homeless.

H10.3 The City shall continue to seek state and federal funding for additional emergency, transitional and permanent housing to supplement that being provided by private non-profits and religious organizations.

H10.4 The City shall work with the Pinellas County Coalition of the Homeless to conduct “point-in-time” surveys to assess the size and needs of the homeless population. These surveys will be conducted during the month of January of each year.

ISSUE: Housing Strategy

A variety of housing programs have been identified in the technical documentation and several new programs have been implemented by the City. In addition, the survey results from the citywide codes survey and from target neighborhood plans have become available for use. There is need to evaluate all current programs, and potential future housing programs, and match substandard housing data with program objectives and specific target areas.

OBJECTIVE H11:

The City shall continue to implement the Consolidated Plan, evaluate the plan annually, and update the resulting implementation schedule as necessary.
Policies:

H11.1 The plan review will identify target areas of the City for redevelopment, conservation, and rehabilitation.

H11.2 The plan review shall identify alternative programs and funding sources, in addition to evaluating the current programs available.

H11.3 The review of the redevelopment alternative shall include a review of the necessary legal and regulatory mechanisms to complement a redevelopment plan, and propose amendments to the appropriate legislation or city codes.

H11.4 Review of the redevelopment alternatives shall consider innovative techniques and mechanisms for creative site planning, encouraging a mix of housing types, density bonuses and other flexible techniques.

H11.5 Review of the redevelopment alternative shall consider incentives to encourage residential redevelopment activity by the private sector.

ISSUE: Downtown Residential Redevelopment

Since the early 1980's, downtown redevelopment strategies in St. Petersburg have focused mainly on stimulating business, commercial and public use facilities. There has been significant retail and office redevelopment since the adoption of the Intown Redevelopment Plan in 1982. New businesses and thousands of new employees in conjunction with a new active image (museums, Tropicana Field, Renaissance Vinoy Resort, and restaurants) are reshaping attitudes about downtown St. Petersburg. However, there is a lack of mixed uses, including residential uses to balance the retail and office development required to make the area totally successful as a vibrant center in the City. The absence of such active strategies to develop downtown residential areas have magnified the incidence of abandoned and boarded-up buildings, empty lots and deteriorating conditions, which are impediments to continued new investment. These areas would be effectively addressed by a complete strategy to promote downtown residential development. The City currently has a Downtown Residential Strategies study which specifically addresses housing and the required amenities for the redevelopment.

OBJECTIVE H12:

The City shall evaluate and implement, as appropriate, the Downtown Residential Strategies study to develop a strong residential base and the required amenities necessary to address the overall development of downtown and revitalize the City’s center.

Policies:

H12.1 Amend the City's Intown Redevelopment Plan to include the appropriate components of the Downtown Residential Strategies.
H12.2 Encourage medium density residential development, including combinations of new construction, in-fill development and rehabilitation, and mixed-use development, including neighborhood commercial (restaurants/retail/services).

H12.3 Undertake selected street "calming" projects to "humanize" street width dimensions, create two-way residential street scale, and increase on-street parking.

H12.4 Provide strategic city investments in public infrastructure to promote residential development, e.g., parks, streetscape improvements, sidewalks, and utilities.

H12.5 Work with the recommendations of the Permitting Task Force as presented to City Council on August 15, 1996, to facilitate housing development in the downtown area.

H12.6 Support citizen or private initiatives to create a Historic District or Districts, where appropriate, to promote restoration as an integral part of the residential redevelopment strategy, and to take advantage of building and fire codes relief and financial incentives.

H12.7 Develop City financial incentives to enhance the feasibility of downtown residential development.

H12.8 Work with the private sector to help establish a financing mechanism to aggressively fund and promote downtown residential development.

**OBJECTIVE H13:**

To provide safe, sanitary, affordable housing that maximizes resource efficiency while reducing the environmental and sociological impacts of relocation, construction, rehabilitation, restoration and building removal, by establishing a green building program.

**Policies:**

H13.1 The City shall establish a green building incentive program based on the best available science, by October 2010. The City shall work with Pinellas County, the University of South Florida, the Florida Green Building Coalition, the Florida Solar Energy Center, the U.S. Green Building Council, the U.S. Department of Energy, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to determine the best available science. Green building certification shall consider environmental protection, resource conservation and human health considerations over the lifecycle of the development. Dependent on a project’s certification, the incentive program may allow for fee relief, expedited permitting and development review, relaxed lot size and setback requirements.

H13.2 The City shall actively seek rebates to offer to residential consumers of alternative and efficient energy design, construction and operation technologies and methods.

H13.3 The City shall promote the incorporation of US EPA Energy Star Building and Appliances programs into construction and rehabilitation practices. The City shall make

H13.4 The City shall educate the public about the economic and environmental benefits of resource efficient design, construction and demolition.

H13.5 The City’s LDRs shall continue to support mixed-income housing in or near employment centers and recognize the positive fiscal impacts in transit-accessible, high density locations.

H13.6 The City shall encourage higher density development in its Planned Redevelopment future land use map categories through implementation of the LDRs. This type of development will help reduce GHGs and minimize carbon footprints.

H13.7 The City shall provide housing density bonuses for workforce housing as outlined in the LDRs.

H13.8 The City shall continue to provide for an expedited plan review for housing projects which promote energy conservation and the use of LEED construction methods.