

---

Posted on Fri, Jun. 30, 2006

REAL-ESTATE SQUEEZE

## New rule targets affordable-housing needs

Broward County is pushing harder to get cities moving on affordable-housing initiatives.

BY NATALIE P. McNEAL  
[nmcneal@MiamiHerald.com](mailto:nmcneal@MiamiHerald.com)

Broward County wants to use its muscle to force construction of less costly homes and development of financing programs for lower-income buyers.

Commissioners this week passed an ordinance giving the county the power to hold up approvals on some large-scale development until a city shows how it's helping middle-income residents buy homes. The new rules take effect next year.

"We didn't really have an affordable-housing policy in Broward," said County Mayor Ben Graber. "Every time we approached our municipalities about affordable housing, they were each doing their own thing."

The new rule will apply only to developments of more than 100 homes that also require the county to sign off on a change in the land use. That's most likely to happen in redeveloping areas in eastern cities and along U.S. 441, where builders are eager to mix condos into formerly commercial areas.

The price of housing has rapidly outpaced middle-class incomes in Broward, making homes largely unaffordable for families earning less than about \$70,000.

A median-priced single-family home in Broward costs \$360,600. That means half the houses cost more and half cost less.

Now, cities won't get the land-use change until they lay out their plan for providing affordable units, according to the ordinance passed Tuesday.

"We came up with a menu," Graber said. Choices include showing that they already have existing affordable housing and reducing permitting costs for new affordable housing, among others.

Barbara Blake, assistant executive director of the Broward County Planning Council, said the county will host educational workshops for cities this summer about affordable-housing policies.

Cities in Broward are already aware of the need for action on housing costs.

In Coral Springs, a single-family home runs about \$400,000; townhomes and condos cost about \$250,000. The median income is \$72,000.

The city is working on a program that would provide schoolteachers and nurses with second mortgages to supplement the purchase price of a home, with no payments for five years.

"It's a work in progress," said Erdal Donmez, assistant city manager in Coral Springs.