

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Pathways to Removing Obstacles to Housing (PRO Housing)

LEON COUNTY, FL:

Commitment to Increase Affordable Housing APPLICATION

Leon County is the capital county of the State of Florida – the third most populous state in the U.S. Leon County is 702 square miles and located in the center of the State’s panhandle with a population of approximately 301,724. The City of Tallahassee is the only municipality in Leon County and approximately 67% of the population live within the City limits.

As supported by data prepared by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Leon County has an acute demand for housing affordable to households with incomes below 100% of the area median income. Approximately 18,000 households that earn below 50% of the area median income in Leon County are severely cost burdened. As a result, they spend more than 50% of their income on housing costs including rent and utilities. A recent study conducted by the Shimberg Center for Housing Studies at the University of Florida (*2022 Rental Market Study*) found that Leon County has a deficit of 7,855 affordable rental units available for households earning less than 50% of the area median income.

It is for these reasons Leon County is committed to increasing and preserving the stock of affordable housing in our community. This commitment is demonstrated frequently through innovative policies, enhanced partnerships, and strategic investments. Over the past two years, Leon County has provided \$5.765 million in direct funding and authorized the issuance of approximately \$183 million in bond financing for the development and redevelopment of affordable multifamily housing projects to increase the number of affordable housing rental units. Within that same period, the Leon County has taken steps to adopt and/or evaluate programs and policies that include:

- Establishment of the Leon County-Tallahassee Community Land Trust
- Establishment of the Tallahassee-Leon County Landlord Risk Mitigation Fund
- Establishment of the Homeownership Development Program.
- Interlocal Agreement with City of Tallahassee for Funding Coordination
- Adoption of Policy on Rental Unit Set Aside for Households Exiting Homelessness
- Evaluation of Mandatory Inclusionary Housing Policy
- Adoption of Policy to Access Affordable Housing Through Accessory Dwelling Units
- Addressing Heir Property Issues for Low-Income Housholds
- Evaluation of the Tallahassee-Leon County Comprehensive Plan

Although the actions taken will provide significant steps in increasing and preserving affordable housing, several key barriers include: the availability of financing and subsidies for affordable housing; requirements to access affordable rental housing (i.e., credit history, no criminal background, high security deposits, etc.); the availability of Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers; and over concentration of affordable housing units in neighborhoods with limited resources.

The activities presented in our application build on Leon County’s efforts to overcome the key local barriers to increase and preserve the stock of affordable housing for low-income households in the community and the continued demand that exists to address the need. Leon County is applying for the HUD PRO Grant for development activities that would include:

- Gap financing of multifamily housing development projects that would provide low-income households
- Providing down payment assistance to individuals and families currently receiving Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers to purchase homes and ultimately make available vouchers for families that are on the Tallahassee Housing Authority's waitlist
- Constructing new homes for low-income households in neighborhoods that have historically experienced poverty and racial inequities
- Increasing the number of low-income residents in the unincorporated areas to preserve and enhance the quality of their homes

The total cost of the proposal is \$12.26 million. Leon County is requesting \$7 million through the HUD PRO Grant and will provide \$5.26 million in leverage. As proposed in this application, an estimated 495 new affordable housing units will be created in our community, and an estimated 25 existing affordable housing units will be rehabilitated due to the partnership of Leon County and HUD.

Resolution of Civil Requirements – Leon County **does not** have any outstanding civil rights matters that must be resolved.

Timely Submission of Application – Leon County’s application will be submitted timely.

Eligible Applicant – Leon County is a county government and therefore eligible to apply for the HUD PRO Housing grant opportunity.

Number of Applications – Leon County is submitting only one application as required.

Statutory and Regulatory Requirements Affecting Eligibility – Leon County is compliant with all requirements pertaining to Applicants of HUD’s Financial Assistance Programs and has the necessary processes and systems in place to comply with the Award Term.

Other Submission Requirements

The following items will be addressed in the narrative exhibits (where noted) and required forms will be uploaded to Grants.gov. and posted publicly with the final application package.

1. Standard Application, Assurances, Certifications and Disclosures
 - a. Standard Form 424 (SF-424) Application for Federal Assistance (required form)
 - b. Assurances (HUD 424-B) (required form)
 - c. Applicant Disclosure Report Form 2880 (HUD 2880) (required form)
 - d. Code of Conduct
 - e. Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (See Exhibit D, Soundness of Approach)
2. Other Program Specific Requirements
 - a. Limited English Proficiency (LEP): Leon County’s public notice of the grant application that was published in newspapers and sent via email included information for receiving assistance in Spanish.
 - b. Physical Accessibility: Leon County has and will continue to comply all applicable laws and regulations. The public meeting notice on the grant application included contact information for the Housing Services Manager to provide any special accommodations. In effort to accommodate all persons, a virtual and in-person public meeting was held. The in-person meeting was held in a physically accessible space. All materials posted on Leon County’s website are ADA compliant.
 - c. Environmental Review: Leon County will comply with all applicable environmental requirements related to any awarded funds.
 - d. Federal Assistance Assurance (required form)
 - e. 424-CBW Budget Form (required form)
 - f. Certification Regarding Lobbying (required form)
 - g. Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (SF-LLL) (required form)

Describe your efforts so far to identify, address, mitigate, or remove barriers to affordable housing production and preservation.

Through innovative policies, enhanced partnerships, and strategic investments, Leon County, Florida has been steadfast in its commitment to improve access to affordable housing and increase the stock of quality, sustainable, and affordable housing for low-income individuals and families. These efforts have been adopted and implemented parallel to efforts taken by the Leon County Government to advance racial equity and tackle intergenerational poverty in neighborhoods in Leon County that have historically experienced inequities and disinvestment. The PRO Housing Grant would build on Leon County's commitment to coordinate and collaborate with local partners including government, businesses, not-for-profit organizations, and (most importantly) residents to remove barriers to affordable housing through the production of more than 500 new affordable rental units and homeownership developments over the next six (6) years.

Within the past two years, Leon County has held three workshops including two jointly with the City of Tallahassee to develop policies, strengthen partnerships, and increase investments in affordable housing. Additionally, Leon County's Affordable Housing Advisory Committee, comprised of local housing stakeholders and professionals appointed by the Board of County Commissioners, meets at least four times per year to provide recommendations on policy, programs, and initiatives that could reduce barriers to affordable housing and preserve affordable housing. The following details Leon County's efforts that have been adopted and implemented thus far to reduce barriers, improve access and increase the stock of affordable housing in our community.

Gap Financing for Tallahassee Housing Authority Multifamily Development. Over the past three years, Leon County has provided \$5.765 million in gap financing for a local multifamily development project in order to increase the stock of affordable rental units for low-income households. The highest affordable housing need in Leon County is affordable rental housing units for households that earn 50% or less of the area median income. The Shimberg Center for Housing Studies (Shimberg Center) located at the University of Florida conducts research into housing policy and planning, with a special focus on housing affordability for Florida residents. The Shimberg Center provides data and applied research to state agencies, local planners, the housing industry, non-profits, and others involved in shaping housing policy in Florida. According to the *2022 Rental Market Study* released by the Shimberg Center in June 2022, Leon County has a deficit of 7,855 affordable rental units for households earning 50% or less of the area median income.

Therefore, Leon County has provided considerable direct investment into affordable rental redevelopment projects. In 2021, the Tallahassee Housing Authority, which is the sole public housing authority in Leon County, commenced the process of redeveloping the Orange Avenue Apartments. The 29-acre public housing complex comprised of 200 housing units built between 1971 and 1972 located in the South City neighborhood. The redeveloped project will transform the site into 400 unit mixed-income development with increased units for households earning 60% or below the area median income and serve as an anchor for the redevelopment of the South City neighborhood. Due to higher interest rates and increased

costs of construction labor and materials, the project has experienced gaps in financing, similar to many affordable housing projects around the State of Florida. Since 2021, Leon County has invested \$5.3 million in the Orange Avenue Redevelopment project utilizing a combination of local tax incremental financing funding, American Rescue Plan Act funding and Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA) funding. Most recently, in June 2023, \$1.5 million in Leon County funding (including ERA funding) was committed to phase three of the project that will build approximately 100 units for senior residents that earn 60% or less of the area median income. Federal funding allocated to Leon County such as ARPA and ERA have been critical to our effort to increase the stock of affordable housing for low-income households.

Establishment of the Tallahassee-Leon County Community Land Trust. In July 2019, Leon County partnered with the City of Tallahassee to establish the Tallahassee-Leon County Community Land Trust. A community land trust is a tool used to increase access to affordable housing and build a stock of housing that will remain affordable to low-income households in perpetuity. Under the community land trust model, a nonprofit organization acquires, manages and retains ownership of the land. A community land trust sells the home to lower income households. The land is preserved under a 99-year ground lease held by the nonprofit CLT. Because the land is leased by the community land trust and held separately from the home, the price of the home is limited to the value of the structure which ensures the home remains affordable.

In March 2020, the County entered into a formal agreement with the Tallahassee Lenders' Consortium (TLC), a local not-for-profit organization that specializes in providing homebuyer education and credit counseling to low-income households, to serve as the Community Land Trust. The City of Tallahassee also entered into a separate agreement with TLC. As part of the agreement with TLC, Leon County conveys land/properties that can be utilized to develop or redevelop residential housing for the community land trust. The City of Tallahassee provides funding to the TLC to construct homes on the property which are ultimately sold to low-income residents at below market rate.

In November 2020, the County donated four parcels to the TLC for construction of new affordable homes for sale through the community land trust. Under the TLC's development plan, the four parcels will include the construction of eight new affordable housing units (two single-family detached homes and three two-unit duplexes or paired townhomes). In 2022, TLC completed the first of the single-family homes. Due to continued higher interest rates and increased construction-related costs, TLC has experienced delays in completing additional homes for the Community Land Trust. However, the organization is currently constructing homes on two more of the parcels donated by Leon County. Each home in the community land trust will remain affordable in perpetuity by allowing the community land trust homeowners to earn a portion of the equity in the home while also establishing a resale formula that will ensure a subsequent low-income family can afford to purchase the home. The Tallahassee-Leon County Community Land Trust is a testament to Leon County's efforts to partner with local stakeholders to increase the stock of affordable housing.

Establishment of the Tallahassee-Leon County Landlord Risk Mitigation Fund. In order to increase access to affordable housing for individuals and families that regularly experience barriers due to past mistakes, Leon County partnered with the City of Tallahassee in July 2021, to establish the Tallahassee-Leon County Landlord Risk Mitigation Fund. Risk mitigation funds incentivize landlords to provide housing to individuals and families considered high risk due to poor credit history, past evictions, and/or criminal background. This population traditionally experiences a greater challenge to accessing quality affordable housing and also requires a higher level of human services such as mental health and substance abuse treatment, education, childcare assistance, and job training. Risk mitigation funds alleviate the financial risk to the landlord for costs associated with past due rent and property damages.

The Tallahassee-Leon County Landlord Risk Mitigation Fund offers financial incentives, which include a one-time bonus of \$500 as incentive to lease to an individual or family experiencing homelessness and allows landlords to receive up to \$2,000 for unpaid rent and up to \$1,000 for damages. Leon County has allocated \$100,000 to the program; the City of Tallahassee has allocated \$150,000. To date, approximately 19 landlords with approximately 45 units have enrolled into the program.

Establishment of the Homeownership Development Program. In July 2021, Leon County created the Homeownership Development (HOD) Program to assist in capacity building for small local developers as well as construct homes in neighborhoods primarily that have historically experienced poverty, racial inequities, and disinvestment. The HOD Program is designed to provide up to \$100,000 in funding for developers to build homes for first-time homebuyers that earn 80% or below the area median income. The funds may be utilized for land acquisition, infrastructure, rezoning, permitting, and other development costs. For the HOD Program, preference is given to proposed projects in the Bond, Frenchtown, Griffin Heights, Providence, and South City neighborhoods. These are the neighborhoods that Leon County has identified in partnership with the City of Tallahassee for greater investment due to historic poverty, racial inequities, and disinvestment. Leon County began accepting applications for the HOD program in July 2023 and has since awarded over \$500,000 in subsidies to nonprofit organizations and small businesses to finance the construction of nine new homes for low-income first-time homebuyers, including four units on parcels donated by the County to the Leon County-Tallahassee Community Land Trust, and five units in targeted neighborhoods that have historically experienced poverty and racial inequities.

Interlocal Agreement with City of Tallahassee for Funding Coordination. In July 2022, Leon County and the City of Tallahassee entered into an interlocal agreement to better coordinate our investment and efforts to increase the stock of affordable housing utilizing funds allocated annually by the State of Florida to each local government. The State Housing Initiative Partnership (SHIP) is the primary source of funding for Leon County and the City of Tallahassee's respective housing programs. These programs include Down Payment Assistance, Emergency Home Repair, Home Rehabilitation, Home Replacement, Rental Development, and Homeownership Development. The City of Tallahassee is the only municipality in Leon County. Traditionally, Leon County has utilized its SHIP funds exclusively in the unincorporated areas, while the City of Tallahassee has utilized its SHIP

funds within its municipal limits. In order to increase investment in neighborhoods that have historically experienced poverty and racial inequity through increase affordable housing and homeownership, Leon County entered into an interlocal agreement that allows for the utilization of County SHIP funds within the City limits. With the interlocal agreement in place, Leon County and City of Tallahassee are able to coordinate on housing programs such as Down Payment Assistance, Rental Development, and Homeownership Development for households that earn 80% or below the area median income.

Adoption of Policy on Rental Unit Set Aside for Households Exiting Homelessness. In an effort to increase access to affordable housing for individuals and families experiencing homelessness, Leon County adopted a policy in July 2023 that requires multifamily housing developments seeking direct funding or bond financing authorization to set aside a portion of rental units for households exiting homelessness. Like most communities in the United States, Leon County has experienced a significant increase in homelessness. The Big Bend Continuum of Care (Big Bend CoC) is recognized by HUD and the State of Florida as the regional planning and oversight organization for homelessness in Leon and seven (7) neighboring counties. According to the 2023 Point-In-Time count conducted by the Big Bend CoC, our region experienced a 22% increase in the overall homeless population and 60% increase in the unsheltered population. As presented in the report *ALL IN: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness* prepared by the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, a key strategy to reducing homelessness is to increase the stock of affordable housing for individuals and families experiencing homelessness.

According to the Big Bend CoC, most homeless households earn below 30% of the area median income. The policy that was adopted by the Board of County Commissioners in July 2023 requires developments seeking direct funding or bond financing authorization to set aside a portion of rental units to set aside units for households earning 30% or below the area median income. As mentioned earlier, Leon County has invested \$5.3 million in direct funding to the Orange Avenue Apartments operated by the Tallahassee Housing Authority which will increase the stock of affordable housing on the property 100%. Additionally, Leon County has authorized the Housing Finance Authority of Leon County (HFA), a dependent special district of the County focused on financing affordable housing projects, to issue \$183 million in bond financing since 2021 that will build approximately 1,379 affordable rental units over the next 12-18 months with 100 units set aside for households that earn 30% or below the area median income. This includes a \$35 million bond that will construct 156 affordable units with 39 units set aside for households that earn 30% or less of the area median income.

Evaluation of Inclusionary Housing Policy. Leon County is evaluating the adoption of an inclusionary policy that would incentivize new residential developments (homeownership and multifamily) of 20 units or more to set aside a portion for low-to-moderate income households. With the continued rise in housing costs, the goal is to increase the stock of affordable housing through regulatory policy. In general, the intent of an inclusionary housing policy is to increase production of affordable housing units within high market rate developments for low-to-moderate income households to encourage economic integration and access to high-quality amenities such as schools.

In February 2022, the Board of County Commissioners held a workshop with the Tallahassee City Commission at which time they directed the drafting of an inclusionary housing ordinance to require proposed new residential developments (homeownership and multifamily) of 20 units or more within our urban service area to set aside a portion for low-to-moderate income households that could be adopted and implemented uniformly by both jurisdictions. The Tallahassee-Leon County Urban Services Area is comprised of the entire city jurisdiction and portions of unincorporated Leon County; the urban service area includes access to water/sewer infrastructure, mass transit, schools and employment centers. Over the past several months, the County has been holding meetings with realtors, developers, residents, and other local stakeholders to draft an ordinance that balances the community-wide need for affordable housing and provides incentives to developers that would reduce the cost of implementing the ordinance. These incentives may include expedited permitting, density bonuses, and fee waivers. The proposed inclusionary housing ordinance is expected to be brought before the Board of County Commissioners by early 2025.

Affordable Housing Through Accessory Dwelling Units. Aligned with our ongoing efforts to remove barriers to affordable housing and support infill developments, Leon County is began allowing greater flexibility for property owners to construct accessory dwelling units (ADU) in November 2023. An ADU is a single-dwelling unit sharing ownership with a principal structure on a single property. ADUs are more commonly known as mother-in-law suites and have a long history in the United States, providing for intergenerational living, aging-in-place, and affordable housing. ADUs have increased in popularity in recent years, prompting local governments to update and improve local zoning codes that regulate the size, location, and many other components of this affordable housing option. Additionally, ADUs increase the range of housing choices and the supply of accessible and affordable housing units in the community. They also provide property owners with flexibility in establishing separate living quarters for purposes such as caring for seniors, providing housing for their children, or obtaining rental income.

Addressing Heir Property Issues for Low-Income Households. “Heir property” refers to property that is passed via inheritance from an owner(s) to next of kin without clear ownership. Due to the lack of family estate planning, heir property is transferred via intestate succession, a legal process which determines how a person’s assets are distributed following his/her death. Without clear ownership, it can be difficult to sell, finance, repair, or improve the property, as households that occupy heir property have trouble obtaining property insurance, homestead exemptions, home equity loans and building permits. Additionally, heir property can also affect a household’s ability to benefit from the County’s Home Rehabilitation programs, as applicants must have clear legal ownership of their properties in order to be eligible. According to the Florida Bar Journal, heir property issues disproportionately affect low-income communities. In order to address heir property issues, Leon County partnered with Legal Services of North Florida to host a series of title clearing and estate planning workshops in 2023. In January 2024, the Leon County Board of County Commissioners adopted a strategic initiative to enhance the County’s State Housing Initiative Partnership (SHIP) program to provide legal assistance and consultation to residents with heir property issues and estate planning needs that will preserve affordable

housing for low-income families. In support of the Board's strategic initiative to address heir property issues in Leon County, The County allocated \$50,000 in SHIP funds to provide title clearing services to income-eligible heirs through a partnership with a qualified legal aid agency. During the FY 2025, the County will procure services from a qualified legal aid organizations, such as Legal Services of North Florida, to assist low-income households with heir property issues. Funding allocated for heir property support services would be used to cover costs associated with locating heirs, and process serving and filing fees that would ultimately establish clear ownership.

Evaluation of the Tallahassee-Leon County Comprehensive Plan. Leon County is actively evaluating barriers to affordable housing that may exist in our zoning and land use regulatory policies. In September 2022, Leon County and the City of Tallahassee hired a consultant to make updates to our joint Tallahassee-Leon County Comprehensive Plan that will increase the production of affordable housing. The consultant is working to specifically update the land use element and mobility of our Comprehensive Plan which are essential components to increasing the stock of affordable housing. The scope of work for the consultant includes an evaluation of land uses and densities, and the updated Land Use Element is anticipated to consider allowable densities inside the Urban Services Area with a priority placed on infill development. If adopted and implemented through rezonings, the result would be the County and City coordinating to increase allowable densities inside the Urban Services Area.

The consultant is currently in the data collection and analysis phase of the project. In partnership with students from our local universities, Florida A&M University and Florida State University, the consultant has thus far held four (4) public engagement meeting through Leon County to inform residents about our efforts to make updates to the Comprehensive Plan and gather feedback. The project to update the Land Use and Mobility Elements of the Comprehensive Plan is anticipated to be completed by March 2025.

Do you have acute demand for affordable housing? What are your remaining affordable housing needs and how do you know?

Leon County has a low supply and high demand for housing affordable to households that earn below 80% of the area median income. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development has accurately identified Leon County as a priority geographical area for acute demand for affordable housing. As mentioned earlier, the highest affordable housing need in Leon County is affordable rental housing units for households that earn 50% or less of the area median income. According to the Shimberg Center's 2022 *Rental Market Study*, Leon County has a deficit of 7,855 affordable rental units for households earning 50% or less of the area median income.

Additionally, utilizing HUD's Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) dataset and population projections prepared by the Bureau of Economic and Business Research at the University of Florida, the Shimberg Center found that approximately 31,001 households in Leon County that earn below 80% of the area median income are cost burdened. As reflected in Table 1., these households are spending more than 30% of their income on housing costs, including rent and utilities, which as defined by HUD and the

State of Florida Statutes exceeds housing affordability and are therefore cost burdened. Approximately 18,928 households that earn below 80% of the area median income are severely cost burdened.

Table 1. Renter Households, Cost Burden by Income, 2021 Estimate				
County	Household Income	Housing Cost Burden		
		30% or less	30.1-50%	More than 50%
Leon	30% AMI or less	847	892	12,491
Leon	30.01-50% AMI	1,200	4,016	5,248
Leon	50.01-80% AMI	6,037	7,165	1,189
Leon	80.01-100% AMI	4,838	1,591	12
Leon	Greater than 100% AMI	13,870	317	

Also, as presented earlier, according to the 2023 Point-In-Time count, our region experienced a 22% increase in the overall homeless population and 60% increase in the unsheltered population. As presented in the report *ALL IN: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness* prepared by the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, a key strategy to reducing homelessness is to increase the stock of affordable housing for individuals and families experiencing homelessness through expanded engagement, resources, and incentives. For this reason, to address this acute need in our community, considerable focus has been placed by Leon County on policies and investments to increase the stock and production of affordable rental units primarily for low-income households as well as individuals and families exiting homelessness.

What key barriers still exist and need to be addressed to produce and preserve more affordable accessible housing?

Through numerous engagement efforts with local stakeholders and experience with implementing numerous programs to produce and preserve affordable housing, Leon County has identified four (4) key barriers that remain to be addressed and could be mitigated with the PRO Housing Grant:

- 1) Availability of financing and subsidies for affordable housing
- 2) Requirements to access affordable rental housing (i.e., credit history, no criminal background, high security deposits, etc.)
- 3) Availability of Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers
- 4) Over concentration of affordable housing units in neighborhoods with limited resources

Availability of financing and subsidies for affordable housing.

As mentioned earlier, the highest affordable housing need in Leon County is affordable rental housing units for households that earn less than 50% of the area median income. Without subsidies such as low-income housing tax credits, it is difficult for developers to build affordable housing for very low-income and extremely low-income households. Financial institutions provide capital to multifamily housing developments based on

expected income generated primarily from rental income. When rents are set to affordable levels for very low-income and extremely low-income households, there is a significant gap between the money needed to build and the money lenders and investors provide for construction.

Within the past two years, many of the affordable housing project developments in Leon County experienced higher than expected costs caused by increases in construction costs and interest rates that required additional funding. Due to unprecedented levels of federal funding through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and the Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERA), Leon County invested more than \$3 million during this period to address the shortfall that the developments have experienced and ensure that rental units very low-income and extremely low-income households are built in our community. Therefore, as presented in further detail in our proposed activities for funding, our strategic and financial partnership at the federal level to invest in such projects will be imperative in future years as the funding from ARPA and ERAP are exhausted.

Requirements to access affordable rental housing

Similar to market rate rental properties, many affordable housing developments in Leon County with units for very and extremely low-income households set qualification requirements that pose a challenge for this population to access. The requirements often include good credit history, no criminal background, no evictions within the past 2-3 years, and/or high security deposit that includes rent for the first and last month of the lease.

Many individuals and families attempting to exit homelessness struggle to meet these requirements. Several affordable housing developments contract with the Big Bend CoC to place individuals and/or families that earn 30% or less the median income in available units. The Big Bend CoC regularly notifies homeless service providers when units are available for their clients that may be currently residing in transitional housing, homeless shelters, or unsheltered. However, due to the qualification requirements of the affordable housing development, the Big Bend CoC and homeless services providers can struggle to access available units because their clients often have poor credit history, several previous evictions, and criminal records.

Data completed by the Prison Policy Initiative found that formerly incarcerated people in the U.S. are almost 10 times more likely to be homeless than the general public. The Leon County Jail is operated by the Leon County Sheriff who is an independently elected official. Leon County manages the jail facility and also operates the Probation Office. Leon County and the Sheriff's Office jointly manage the Jail Management Information System (JIS) which automates all the information needs for the jail as it relates to inmate housing, management, and dispatchment. In 2020, the County evaluated the JIS, and the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) managed by the Big Bend CoC and found the approximately 45% of individuals in the HMIS had been an inmate in the County Jail based on JIS. For this population, accessing affordable housing is a challenge.

Housing is a key predictor of successful community reentry. As a result, affordable housing is critical to our local efforts to reduce the rate of recidivism. Approximately 109 clients of Leon County's Probation Office are homeless and identified the local homeless shelter as their place of residency. Additionally, access to safe and affordable housing can significantly impact a person's ability to find work, access health services, and successfully participate in their community.

Availability of Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers

There is a high demand for Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers in Leon County. Our local public housing authority, the Tallahassee Housing Authority, has approximately 2,700 clients that receive vouchers and 6,600 local residents on its wait list. The wait list includes many individuals and families that are clients of our local homeless shelters that regularly earn little to no income. Our local family shelter, HOPE Community, is at capacity with approximately 100 women and children that are experiencing homelessness residing in the facility. The majority have applied and remain on the wait list for a housing choice voucher. This demonstrates the significant need for affordable housing for low-income households in our community.

Over concentration of affordable housing units in neighborhoods with limited resources

Another key barrier in Leon County has been the over concentration of affordable housing units in neighborhoods with limited resources. Within the past three years there have been eight (8) affordable housing rental developments permitted that are completed or under construction with approximately 900 units for low-income households in Leon County. However, the majority of the developments have occurred in areas where housing costs are already below the market rate. More importantly, the developments are not within walking distance of essential resources such as grocery stores, pharmacies, healthcare centers, and highly rated schools. During the same three-year period, 22 market rate rental developments have been permitted that are completed or under construction with more than 2,000 units within or adjacent to census tracts that are above the median household income for Leon County. As a result, these developments are located within close proximity of well-resourced neighborhoods.

An article by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation entitled, *Where We Live Matters for Our Health: Neighborhoods and Health*, found that social and economic features of neighborhoods have been linked with mortality, general health status, disability, birth outcomes, chronic conditions, health behaviors and other risk factors for chronic disease, as well as with mental health, injuries, violence and other important health indicators. For these reasons Leon County in partnership with the City of Tallahassee is evaluating the adoption of inclusionary housing policies for residential developments including rental housing.

What is your vision?

Leon County's vision is to build on our efforts to produce and preserve the stock of affordable housing for low-income households in our community through the PRO Housing grant opportunity. Through our mutual commitment, development activities to be adopted and implemented will create or preserve more than 500 new affordable units over the next six years. These proposed activities are based on the County's acute affordable housing needs, barriers identified in the Need section of this application, as well as input and feedback gathered from local stakeholders and partners. Additionally, the proposed activities as detailed meet a national objective and are eligible activities of the PRO Housing grant opportunity.

Multifamily Development Gap Financing Program. A leading barrier to affordable housing production and preservation in Leon County is available funding to address the continued rise of costs to build affordable rental housing developments. The Multifamily Development Gap Financing Program would provide funding to multifamily housing developments that set aside at least 40% of units for extremely and very low-income households (50% or below area median income). The highest affordable housing need in Leon County is affordable rental units for very low-income households earning 50% or less of the area median income. It for this reason, this activity will meet the national objective of benefiting low to moderate income households.

This activity would build on Leon County's efforts to invest federal funding in affordable housing. In the past two years, Leon County has provided \$5.765 million in direct funding including approximately \$3 million in federal dollars to multifamily development projects to address gap financing due to increased construction costs and higher interest rates. The County's investment has resulted in more than 400 affordable rental units that will be developed in the next 12-18 months.

The Multifamily Development Gap Financing Program will also address the key barriers of requirements to access affordable rental housing and the over concentration of affordable housing units in neighborhoods with limited resources. Developments seeking funding would be required to set aside a portion of their units as low-barrier housing that reduces certain restrictions such as minimum credit scores, past evictions and/or criminal record. Aligning with HUD's effort to deconcentrate affordable housing and promote housing choice, priority funding would also be provided to multifamily developments with units for extremely and very low-income households that are located in moderate to high-income U.S. Census tracts in Leon County. Additionally, aligned with the direction by the Leon County Board of County Commissioners, priority funding would also be provided to developments focused on converting vacant buildings into permanent supportive housing for extremely low-income households which include individuals and families exiting homelessness; this priority would further address the key barrier of restrictions to access affordable housing particularly for our homeless population.

Additional requirements will include award of tax credit, bonds, or other financial assistance through the Florida Housing Finance Corporation (FHFC). The FHFC was created by the Florida Legislature to finance statewide programs that increase and maintain the inventory

of affordable housing and also administers the State's low-income housing tax credit program. Over the past two years, most projects financed through FHFC have seen significant gaps in funding due to increased construction costs and higher interest rates. The Multifamily Development Gap Financing Program would provide financial assistance to such projects in Leon County. This activity is anticipated to construct 500 affordable rental units for low-income households over the next six years, including 200 for households earning 50% below the area median income.

Section 8 to Homeownership Down Payment Assistance Program. The Section 8 to Homeownership Down Payment Assistance Program will assist households currently receiving Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers to purchase a home. This activity would address the barrier of available Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers in our community. Our local public housing authority, the Tallahassee Housing Authority, has approximately 2,500 clients that receive vouchers and 9,200 local residents on its waitlist.

In partnership with the Tallahassee Housing Authority, current Section 8 tenants would be engaged and educated about the opportunity to become homeowners and receive financial assistance with down payment and closing costs. The financial assistance through this activity would be in addition to down payment assistance provided by the County, the City of Tallahassee, State of Florida, and other resources which collectively would provide a significant level of funding to purchase and own a home. Once the current tenant purchases a home, this would provide the opportunity for a prospective local resident that maybe on the waitlist to access affordable housing. More Section 8 vouchers are needed, particularly for households that earn less than 50% of the area median income; however, in the interim, this activity will address an immediate and acute need in the community as well as meet the national objective of benefiting low-to-moderate income persons. Participants of the activity must be current Section 8 vouchers clients of the Tallahassee Housing Authority. Similar to other down payment assistance programs, they must also participate in financial education courses provided by local partners in preparation for home ownership. Participants will also be provided access to credit counseling and estate planning services to ensure that they are well positioned to purchase a home and build generational wealth.

The proposed Section 8 to Homeownership Down Payment Assistance Program is essential to breaking intergenerational poverty in Leon County. According to the Joint Center for Housing Studies, home equity represents a larger share of net wealth for low-income households than other groups. Additionally, this activity will seek to spur economic growth through home ownership in neighborhoods that have historically experienced poverty and racial inequities. Priority for financial assistance to the program will be given to Section 8 clients that purchase a home in these neighborhoods. On January 27, 2021, President Biden signed Executive Order 14008, Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad, Section 223 of which establishes the Justice40 Initiative ("Justice40") that directs 40% of the overall benefits of certain federal investments in climate, clean energy, clean water, affordable and sustainable housing, and other investments to disadvantaged communities. This activity is consistent with the Justice40 Initiative and HUD's effort to expand opportunities and resources to underserved communities. This activity is anticipated to provide home ownership to approximately 100 low-income households.

Homeownership Development in Neighborhood First Neighborhoods. Similar to the Section 8 to Homeownership Down Payment Assistance Program, the construction of new homes in neighborhoods identified in the City of Tallahassee's Neighborhood First Program would serve to invest in disadvantaged people and neighborhoods through home ownership. The City of Tallahassee's Neighborhood First Program works with residents and community stakeholders in targeted neighborhoods to develop plans that serve to improve the social and economic outlook of the neighborhoods. The neighborhoods include Bond, Frenchtown, Griffin Heights, Providence, and South City. In 2021, Leon County partnered with the City of Tallahassee to implement the Neighborhood First Program. The homes constructed would be required to be sold to low-income homebuyers.

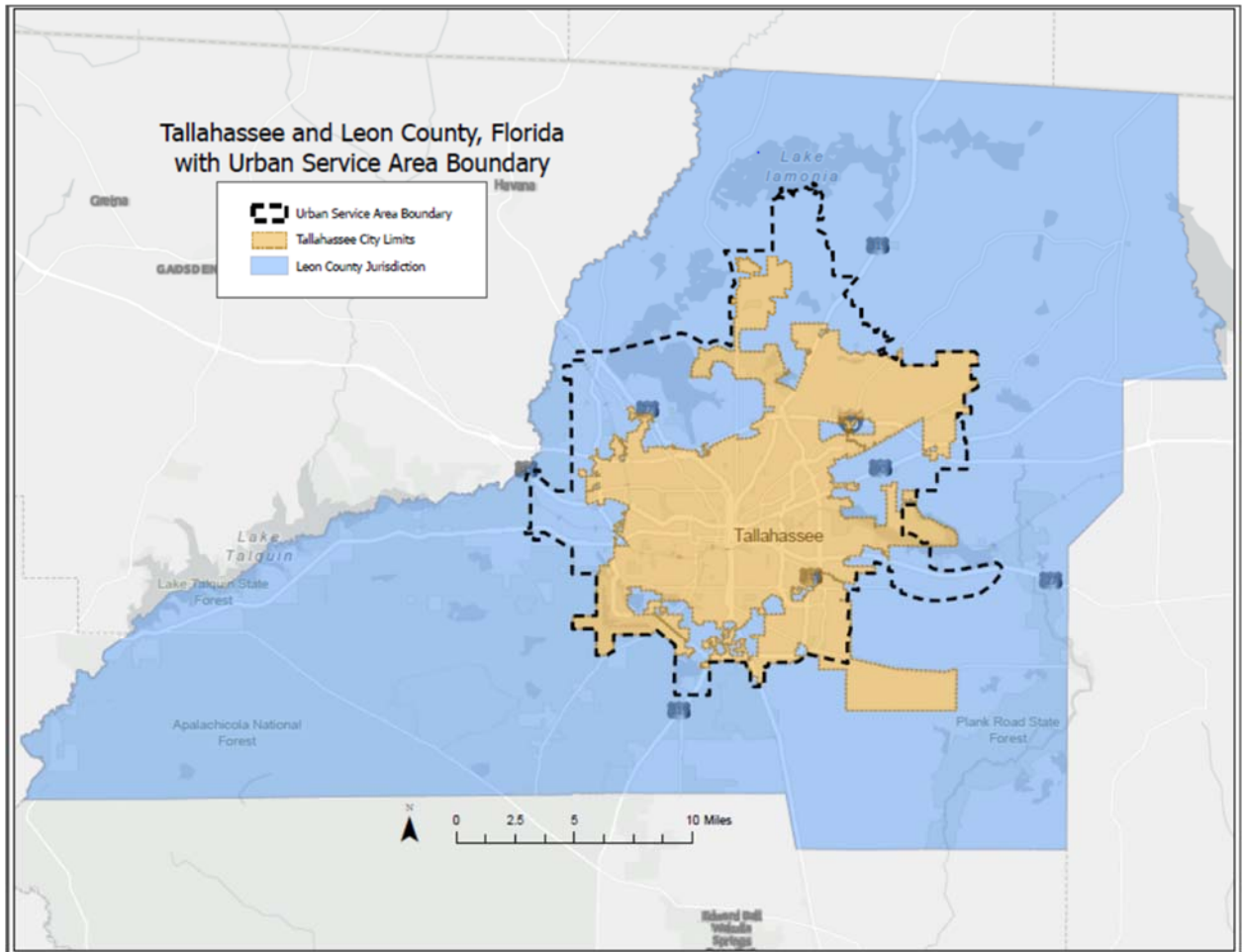
This activity would enhance the County's existing SHIP Homeownership Development Program. Leon County would partner with local not-for-profit organizations such as Big Bend Habitat for Humanity and the Tallahassee-Leon County Community Land Trust (CLT) to construct the homes for low-income households. The partnership would be similar to previously successful efforts to build new homes in disadvantaged neighborhoods. In 2019 Leon County, in partnership with the City of Tallahassee, established the CLT as a tool to preserve the affordability of homes by separating the cost of a home from the cost of the land, allowing the land to be leased by the CLT to the homeowner and limiting the increase of the sales price of the home to ensure it remains affordable in perpetuity. The CLT is operated by the Tallahassee Lenders' Consortium. Through an agreement, Leon County donates properties that are conveyed through tax deeds to the CLT primarily in neighborhoods that are part of the Neighborhood Program to build homes for low-income households; the City has provided financial assistance with construction costs for the CLT homes. Since 2020, Leon County has donated four parcels to the CLT for construction of new affordable homes for sale or lease and has reserved additional lots for future donation to the CLT. Thus far, four units have already been completed on three of the parcels (two single family units and a set of paired townhomes) donated by the County. Four additional units are currently under construction on the fourth County-donated parcel (which was subsequently re-platted into four separate parcels) in the Griffin Heights neighborhood. These four units are located in a Neighborhood First Community and have been subsidized with SHIP funds through the County's Homeownership Development Program. Leon County also donates properties to the Big Bend Habitat for Humanity which also utilizes a model of building and selling affordable homes for low-income households.

The successful partnerships and programs with the CLT and Big Bend Habitat for Humanity will be mirrored with the activity to continue to construct new homes in Bond, Frenchtown, Griffin Heights, Providence, and South City. This will result spurring economic growth in these neighborhoods addressing the identified barrier of available financing and subsidies for affordable housing. This activity also aligns with the Justice40 initiative and HUD's effort to expand opportunities and resources to underserved communities. This activity is anticipated to foster home ownership opportunities for approximately 20 low-income households.

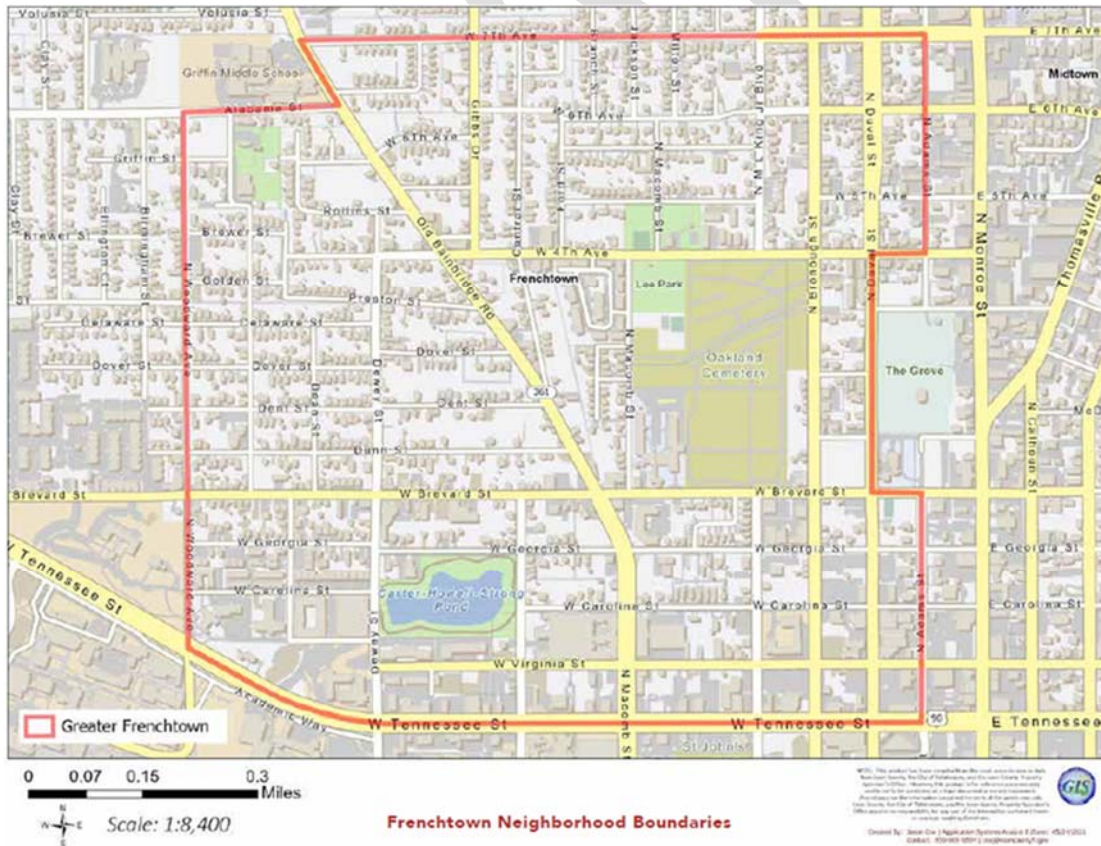
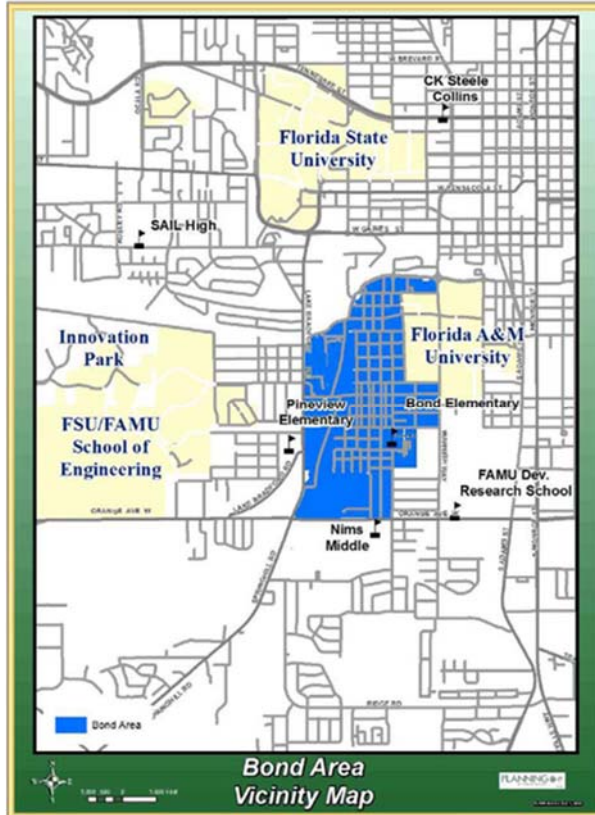
Low-Income Home Preservation. Aligned with Leon County and HUD's mutual commitment to preserve the quality of homes of low-income households, the HUD PRO grant funds would be utilized to enhance Leon County's existing Home Rehabilitation program by increasing the number of households provided assistance with major repairs such as roof replacements and septic tank upgrades. Currently, the program assists low-income households in need of major repairs for health, safety, resiliency, insurability, and code compliance. Leon County's State Housing Initiatives Partnership (SHIP) Home Rehabilitation program is exclusive to residents in the rural portions of Leon County since the City also has a similar program for residents within its limits. The SHIP Home Rehabilitation program is over subscribed. In 2024, approximately 75 residents applied to Leon County for assistance with home rehabilitation or emergency repairs; due to limited funding, 11 were approved for assistance, with only three (3) receiving SHIP Home Rehabilitation. With the additional funding from the HUD PRO grant, Leon County would be able to increase the number of residents in the unincorporated areas that receive home rehabilitation assistance by approximately 50% over the six-year period of the grant. Additionally, the federal funding would allow for greater investment in strengthening the sustainability and resiliency of the homes that are rehabilitated with innovative solutions such as external wall insulation systems with render or cladding materials improve thermal performance and the installation of cool roofs that are designed to reflect more sunlight than a conventional roof, absorbing less solar energy.

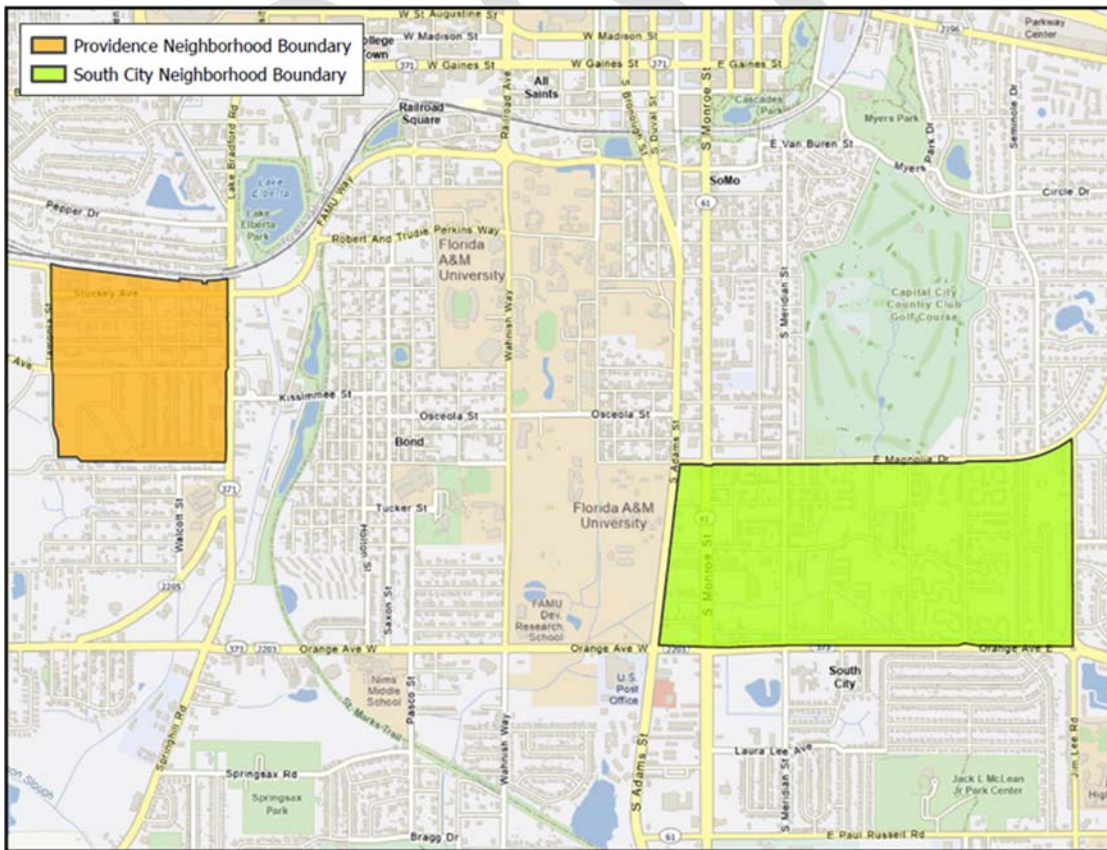
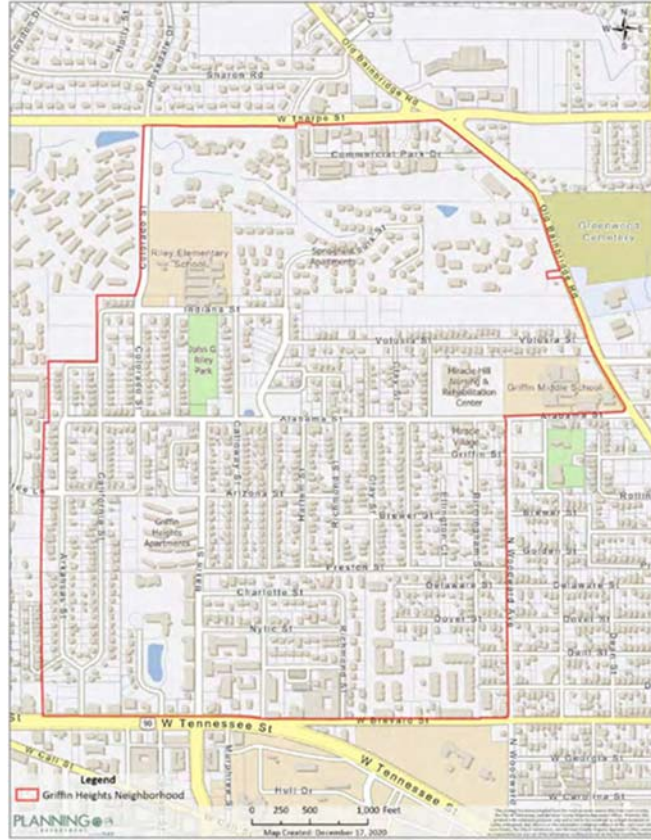
What is your geographic scope?

Leon County's proposed activities for the PRO Housing grant would be countywide by preserving affordable housing units in the unincorporated area of the County as well as creating affordable units in high-opportunity areas and expanding opportunity in underserved areas with our municipal jurisdiction. Leon County is approximately 702 square miles. It has a population of approximately 301,724 people, with 99,891 living in the unincorporated area of the County and 201,833 living within the Tallahassee city limits.



As proposed, the Low-Income Home Preservation program would enhance Leon County’s existing Home Rehabilitation activities by assisting low-income households in unincorporated areas of the County in need of major repairs for health, safety, resiliency, insurability, and code compliance. Leon County would utilize PRO Housing grant funds to finance the development of affordable rental units for low and very low-income households within the Tallahassee-Leon County Urban Services Area with the implementation of the proposed Multifamily Gap Financing Program. Leon County’s proposal to use PRO Housing funds for the construction of new homes with long-term affordability in neighborhoods identified with the City of Tallahassee’s Neighborhood First Program, in conjunction with the proposed Section 8 to Homeownership Down Payment Assistance Program, would serve to provide greater opportunities for homeownership in neighborhoods that have historically experienced poverty and racial inequities (Bond, Frenchtown, Griffin Heights, Providence, and South City).





Who are your key stakeholders? How are you engaging them?

Collaboration and coordination with local partners have always been key to Leon County's effort to produce and preserve affordable housing. It's through these partnerships we have been successful in identifying barriers, developing policies, and making investments that increase access to housing for low-income households.

Leon County Affordable Housing Advisory Committee

In order to incorporate greater community feedback and civic engagement in its efforts to grow and preserve the supply of affordable housing, Leon County has an Affordable Housing Advisory Committee (AHAC). The AHAC's main responsibility is to review the established policies and procedures, ordinances, land development regulations and to recommend specific actions or initiatives which encourage or facilitate the development of affordable housing while protecting the ability of the property to appreciate in value. The AHAC's recommendations are often incorporated into Leon County's Local Housing Assistance Plan (LHAP), which serves as the policy guidance for Leon County's use of State Housing Initiatives Partnership (SHIP) funds. The SHIP program, administered by the Florida Housing Finance Corporation, is the primary source of funding for the County's Housing programs, such as Down Payment Assistance, Emergency Home Repair, Home Rehabilitation, Home Replacement, Rental Development, and Homeownership Development.

At any given time, the AHAC is comprised of 8 to 11 Leon County citizens, appointed by the Board of County Commissioners, that represent various organizations and industries, including advocates for low-income persons in connection with affordable housing, building professionals, and for-profit and not-for-profit providers of affordable housing. The Leon County AHAC meets at least four times per year and meets jointly with the City of Tallahassee's AHAC at least three time per year. The AHAC submits an annual report to the Board of County Commissioners that includes recommendations on the implementation of affordable housing incentives. Over the past year, the Leon County AHAC has made policy recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners related to the County's home rehabilitation, down payment assistance, homeownership development and rental development activities, and the development of an inclusionary housing ordinance. At its October 9, 2023 meeting, the Leon County AHAC gave feedback on strategies included in Leon County's PRO Housing grant application and provided recommendations that were incorporated into the proposed Low-Income Home Preservation Program. If awarded the PRO Housing grant, Leon County would provide regular updates to the AHAC on the use of PRO Housing award funds and continue to seek the guidance of the AHAC to maintain its LHAP to maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of Leon County's affordable housing programs.

The City of Tallahassee

The City of Tallahassee is the only municipality in Leon County and has been a critical and active partner in addressing the affordable housing needs of our community. On February 22, 2022, the Leon County and the City of Tallahassee held a joint Affordable Housing Workshop illustrating the efforts of the County, and the City of Tallahassee to address

affordable housing in this community. The Workshop defined affordable housing, presented the highest affordable housing needs in the community, described challenges to addressing affordable housing, provided an overview of the role of government including the current efforts of both the County and City to promote and invest in affordable housing and presented recommendations to enhance County and City's collective effort to increase the stock of affordable housing in the community. In July 2022, Leon County approved an Interlocal Agreement with the City of Tallahassee which authorizes the County to utilize a portion of its SHIP funding for activities such as homeownership development and rental development within the City's limit. This allows Leon County and the City of Tallahassee to coordinate their respective housing funding sources to increase the stock of affordable housing in neighborhoods that have historically experienced poverty and racial inequities. Leon County staff has regular meetings with the City of Tallahassee staff to discuss and coordinate efforts to grow the stock of affordable housing in our community. Leon County and the City of Tallahassee also have joint meetings of our respective Affordable Housing Advisory Committees at least three times per year.

The Tallahassee Lenders' Consortium

The Tallahassee Lenders' Consortium, Inc. (TLC), a Florida 501(c) 3 nonprofit corporation, was founded in November 1993 by ten local financial institutions and the City of Tallahassee to provide a new affordable mortgage loan product to low- to moderate- income homebuyers. TLC's programs have successfully evolved over the years to include HUD certified comprehensive homebuyer education, consumer credit counseling, post homeownership education classes, delinquency counseling (HUD certified) and "deep subsidy" loans. In 2020, Leon County, the City of Tallahassee and the TLC partnered to establish the CLT to provide greater access to homeownership to low-income households as well as create an inventory of homes that remain affordable in perpetuity. Leon County has contracted with TLC to administer down payment assistance programs for low to moderate-income first-time homebuyers. TLC will play a key role in the administration of activities proposed in Leon County's PRO Housing grant application, such as the Section 8 to Homeownership Down payment Assistance Program and the Homeownership Development Program.

The Tallahassee Housing Authority

The Tallahassee Housing Authority (THA) is a quasi-governmental agency comprised of seven members appointed by the Tallahassee Mayor. For more than 50 years, the THA has provided affordable housing to low-income residents through public housing developments. THA manages over 300 public housing units and about 2,700 Housing Choice/Section 8 Vouchers which pays a portion of housing costs directly to private landlords. In the past two years, Leon County has provided \$5.765 million in direct funding including approximately \$3 million in federal dollars to multifamily development projects to address gap financing due to increased construction costs and higher interest rates. This includes the Tallahassee Housing Authority's Orange Avenue Apartments Redevelopment Project which will double the number of affordable rental units for very low-income households (from 200 units to 400 units) over the next 18 months. Leon County's significant level of support to the Orange Avenue project is a direct result of the unprecedented level of recent federal funding received by the County from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and

Emergency Rental Act (ERA) over the past several years in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Leon County has also committed \$175,000 of ERA funds to finance the master plan for the redevelopment of the THA's Springfield Apartments, a development for very low-income renters located in the Griffin Heights neighborhood. The Tallahassee Housing Authority will be an active partner of Leon County in the implementation of the proposed activities in Leon County's PRO Housing application, such as the Multifamily Development Gap Financing Program and Section 8 to Homeownership Down Payment Assistance Program.

The Housing Finance Authority of Leon County

The Housing Finance Authority of Leon County (HFA) is a dependent special district comprised of seven County Commission-appointed members which serves to alleviate the shortage of affordable housing and investment capital. The seven members of the HFA are appointed by the Leon County Board of County Commissioners. For more than 40 years, the HFA has been a strategic and financial partner of Leon County to increase the stock of affordable housing in the community. The primary function of the HFA is to issue bonds for affordable housing projects. The HFA collaborates with Leon County's Housing Services Division and Real Estate Division to identify nonprofit and/or for-profit organizations, like Habitat for Humanity, that may be interested in developing affordable housing on County-owned parcels that have been escheated to the County. A list of the parcels deemed suitable for affordable housing is presented annually for the Leon County Board of County Commissioners' consideration and approval. If no housing organization is interested in the properties, the parcels are marketed for sale by the Real Estate Division and the HFA shares in the costs of advertising the parcels. All revenue received by the HFA is reinvested to support the County's affordable housing efforts. For example, the HFA supports several Leon County programs and events including the Emergency Housing Repair Program. On May 11, 2021, the County Commission approved a new Interlocal Agreement with the HFA which included the establishment of an application process for considering requests from developers seeking local support and financial contribution for FHFC programs such as 9% tax credits. Developers that wish to request Leon County support and/or funding must apply and submit their proposal to the HFA for evaluation and any recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners. Leon County Division of Housing Services staff attends and participates in monthly HFA meetings.

The Housing Leadership Council of Tallahassee-Leon County

The Housing Leadership Council of Tallahassee-Leon County (Leadership Council) was established in 2018 as a public/private partnership that would serve as the entity to foster greater collaboration and coordination among affordable housing stakeholders. Leon County and City of Tallahassee contract with United Human Services Partnerships (UPHS) to provide administrative support to the Leadership Council annually. The Leadership Council Board of Directors is comprised of a cross section of affordable housing stakeholders representing the public sector, not-for-profit and for-profit sectors. Over the past few years, the Leadership Council focused on engaging private sector participation and investment in affordable housing through social mixers and workshops on subject matters such as permitting and financing. Additionally, the Leadership Council continues to be essential to identifying opportunities to enhance the Community Land Trust through increased private sector participation.

Trusted People Neighborhood Engagement Steering Committee

The purpose and intent of the Trusted People Neighborhood Engagement Steering Committee is to connect human service providers and residents of the neighborhoods associated with the City of Tallahassee's Neighborhood First Plan (Bond, Frenchtown, Griffin Heights, Providence, and South City) for greater awareness and access to available resources. Additionally, the focus group serves as a fact-finding source of community input and technical resources for use by Leon County and City of Tallahassee staff in developing staff recommendations to those governing bodies regarding means to strengthen engagement with neighborhoods experiencing the highest rates of food insecurity to build relationships; improve access to and knowledge of available resources; and reduce barriers to overall economic prosperity. The Trusted People Neighborhood Engagement Steering Committee is required to include residents of the Neighborhood First neighborhoods. Leon County staff brought its initial proposed activities for the PRO Housing grant funding to the Trusted People Neighborhood Engagement Steering Committee and subsequently incorporated suggested from the Committee into its final application.

How does your proposal align with requirements to affirmatively further fair housing?

Leon County's proposal affirmatively furthers fair housing by facilitating the development of affordable housing projects and homeownership assistance programs in accordance with the provisions of Section 760.20-760.37 Florida Statutes, which states that it is unlawful to discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, handicap, or marital status in the award application process for eligible housing. Leon County's proposals to grow the stock of affordable housing would emphasize equal opportunity and accessibility. In addition, the County will utilize a contractor to assess the appropriate level of housing rehabilitation necessary to improve accessibility and enhance independence for participating households having special needs.

The City of Tallahassee's Neighborhood First Program works with residents and community stakeholders in targeted neighborhoods to develop plans that serve to improve the social and economic outlook of those neighborhoods. To address poverty and inequity in the 32304-zip code area and neighborhoods that have historically experienced disinvestment, the Leon County Board of County Commissioners approved the County's participation in the development and implementation of the City's Neighborhood First Program in November 2021. As a result, Leon County staff has continually worked closely with the City as well as residents of the neighborhoods to implement their respective Neighborhood First plans. Utilizing PRO Housing grant funds to construct affordable homes and finance down payment assistance for low-income households in the identified neighborhoods would support the County's partnership with the City to implement the City's Neighborhood First Program to provide greater investment in neighborhoods that have historically experienced poverty and racial inequities.

What are your budget and timeline proposals?

Utilizing the maximum PRO Housing grant funding award (\$7 million) and the County resources available for leveraging (approximately \$5.26 million), Leon County can create 495 and preserve 25 housing units over the course of six fiscal years, beginning in FY 2024. If Leon County were to receive 50% of the maximum award (\$3.5 million), the establishment of the Multifamily Development Gap Financing Program will be prioritized to support the creation of new affordable rental units to address the highest housing need in our

Leon County PRO Housing Grant Activity Fiscal Years 2025-2030 Budget			
Program/Activity	PRO Housing Award Amount	County Leverage Amount	TOTAL
Multifamily Development Gap Financing Program	\$4,000,000	\$731,532	\$4,731,532
Low-Income Home Preservation	\$1,000,000	\$1,800,000	\$2,800,000
Section 8 to Homeownership Down Payment Assistance Program	\$1,000,000	\$300,000	\$1,300,000
Homeownership Development in Neighborhood First Neighborhoods	\$1,000,000	\$1,014,000	\$2,014,000
In-Kind Personnel Costs	-	\$1,416,825	\$1,416,825
Total	\$7,000,000	\$5,262,357	\$12,262,357

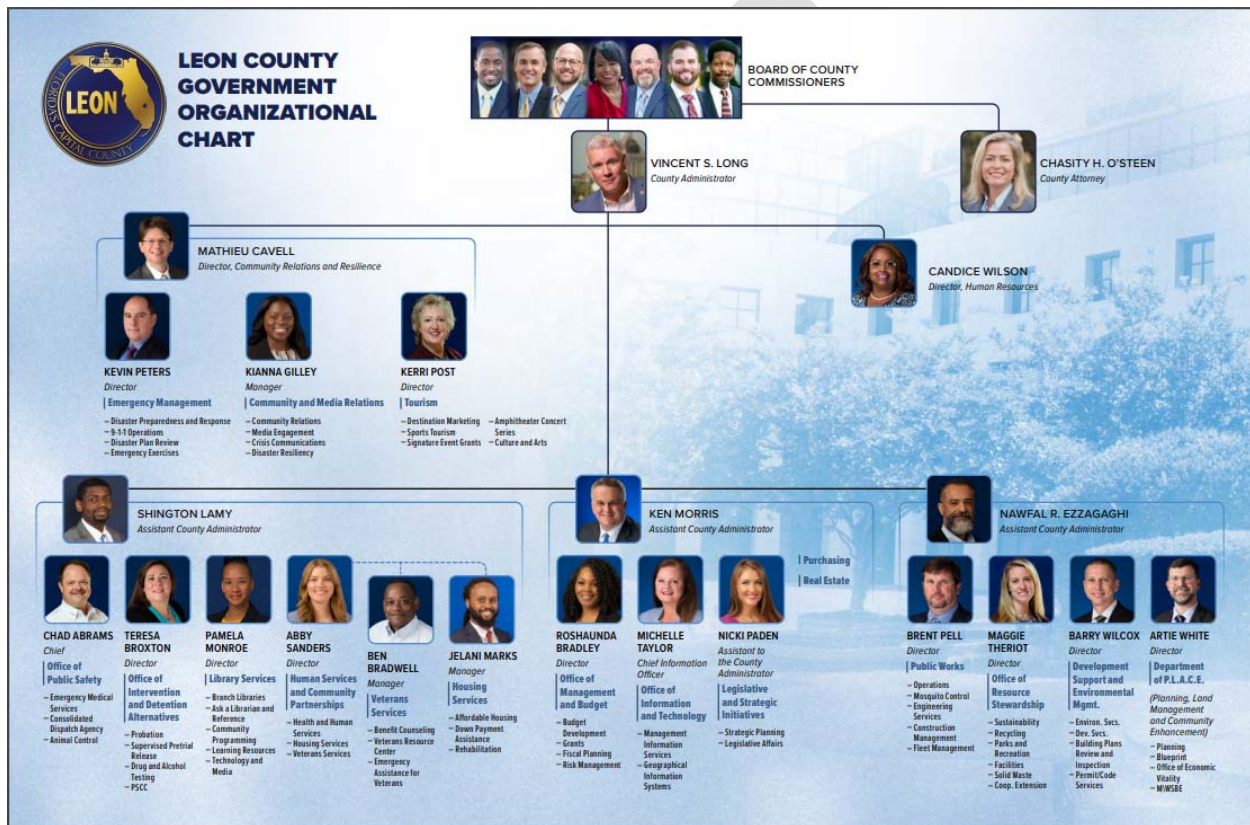
community.

Leon County PRO Housing Grant Activity Goals Delivery Chart

	FY25 Estimate	FY26 Estimate	FY27 Estimate	FY28 Estimate	FY29 Estimate	FY30 Estimate	TOTAL
Affordable Rental Units Created Through Multifamily Development Gap Financing Program	400						400
Number of Affordable Homes Rehabilitated through the Low-Income Home Preservation Program	4	5	5	4	4	3	25
Number of Households Assisted by the Section 8 to Homeownership Down Payment Assistance Program	10	13	14	14	14	10	75
Number of New Affordable Homes Constructed in Neighborhood First Neighborhoods	3	4	4	3	3	3	20
Total Affordable Housing Units Created/Preserved							520

What capacity do you and your Partner(s) have? What is your staffing plan?

Leon County is a political subdivision of the State of Florida and is guided by an elected seven-member Board of County Commissioners. Five members of the Board are elected to serve specific districts and two members are elected at-large. The Board of County Commissioners appoints the County Administrator and County Attorney. The County Administrator is appointed by the Board of County Commissioners and is responsible for carrying out the directives and policies of the Board. The County Administrator is also responsible for the management and supervision of all functions and personnel under the Board of County Commissioners.



Leon County has managed several federal grants including a \$4.6 million grant consisting of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding distributed through the State of Florida and direct appropriations through HUD that were awarded in 2022 for the renovation of a facility that will serve as a community center for low-to-moderate income households in a rural portion of Leon County.

The collaboration of several Leon County departments will be necessary to perform the necessary project management, quality assurance, financial and procurement, and internal control capacity to quickly launch and implement the proposed activities associated with this application. The staffing plan for Leon County's HUD PRO Housing grant proposal is largely based on the capacity of Office of Human Services and Community Partnerships

(HSCP) which includes the Divisions of Housing Services, Veteran Services, and Human Services and Healthcare Services. HSCP partners with the community through many safety net organizations and partners (including contractors, funders, subrecipients, community stakeholders, citizen committees and other government agencies) to address the needs of the most vulnerable populations of Leon County. HSCP will lead Leon County's administration of PRO Housing grant funding and the project management of the associated activities. Several HSCP positions will play key roles in the administration of funding associated with the PRO Housing grant:

- ***Assistant County Administrator***

Recently promoted Assistant County Administrator Shington Lamy has worked with Leon County for approximately 20 years. His diversity of experience and trademark high energy served him well as the Director of HSCP for seven years, as he navigated the intricate web of state and federal programs (Medicaid, CDBG, SHIP) to secure funding for the most vulnerable populations. Shington Lamy has developed policies, implemented programs and continuously improved processes related to homelessness, healthcare services, housing, and other essential human services in the community. During this time, Shington has overseen the investment of more than \$32 million in County funding to address homelessness that included eviction prevention for more than 5,000 households; and more than \$150 million in direct and bond-authorized funding to increase the stock of affordable housing that will result in over 1,000 more units in the next 12-18 months. Assistant County Administrator Shington Lamy played a lead role in the development of this application.

- ***Director of Human Services & Community Partnerships***

Abigail "Abby" Thomas serves as the Director of HSCP. Abby Thomas joined the Leon County team over three years ago. She served for several years as a Human Services Analyst, managing the County's human service programs including the Community Human Services Partnership (CHSP) and more than \$6 million in federal funding invested by the County in response to the COVID-19 pandemic to address homelessness, food insecurity, mental health, legal services and other human service needs. Abby Thomas has also overseen Leon County's Direct Emergency Assistance Program to prevent the eviction, foreclosure, and utility disruption for more than 200 County households; and led the implementation of performance measures for CHSP to ensure programs funded by the County meet the highest human service needs in the community as well as the launch of the CHSP Homeless Service Category, which enhanced County investment in local homeless programs.

- ***Housing Services Manager***

HSCP's Division of Housing Services is led by Jelani Marks. Jelani Marks joined the Leon County team in 2016 and spent most of his tenure in the Office of Management & Budget before joining the Housing Services Division in October 2022. As Housing Services Manager, Jelani Marks is leading efforts to increase and preserve the stock of affordable housing in Leon County by supervising the implementation of programs and services such as home rehabilitation, down payment assistance, homeowner education,

homeownership development, and rental development. Jelani Marks also leads the provision of staff support and/or representation to housing related citizen committees, non-profit, and community organizations such as the Affordable Housing Advisory Committee and represents the Housing Services Division and reports on any necessary housing-related activities to the Housing Finance Authority of Leon County. Jelani Marks represents the Division of Housing Services at all public outreach events and maintains and develops relationships with governmental, non-profit, technical groups, contractors and community organization partners related to the Housing Program. Housing Services Manager Jelani Marks played a key role in the development of this application.

- ***Affordable Housing Coordinator***

Chelisa Kirkland serves HSCP's Division of Housing Services as the Affordable Housing Coordinator. Chelisa Kirkland acts as the Division's loan portfolio manager and lead closing agent, including the production of new grant funded mortgages and other security instruments. Chelisa Kirkland also serves as the Division's records retention officer and scores applications for Homeownership Development, Rental Development and other programs. Chelisa Kirkland drafts written reports, prepares meeting materials for the Affordable Housing Advisory Committee and staff reports for the Housing Finance Authority of Leon County. Affordable Housing Coordinator Chelisa Kirkland played a supporting role in the preparation of this application.

- ***Neighborhood Engagement & Community Partnerships Manager***

Marcus West serves HSCP as the Neighborhood Engagement & Community Partnerships Manager. In this role, Marcus West acts as lead staff to the Trusted People Neighborhood Engagement Committee to coordinate quarterly meetings with agencies and programs funded to gain knowledge of the variety resources available to the neighborhoods. Marcus West also coordinates quarterly meetings with neighborhood stakeholders to gather information on neighborhood needs and share information on available resources in the community with various community agencies and partners and promotes County-funded Community and Human Services Programs and activities to neighborhood residents, including community workshops on heir property.

- ***Human Services Specialist***

Mindy Conney serves as the Human Services Specialist in HSCP, providing administrative support to the department. Mindy Conney provides office support and performs fiscal work. Mindy Conney also assists in program activities, maintains inventory, ensures that office equipment is working properly and provides information to Leon County residents concerning program activities and services.

Other Leon County Departments

In addition to the administrative and project management aspects provided by HSCP, the financial and procurement capacities for Leon County's proposed activities associated with PRO Housing grant funding will be primarily based in Leon County's Office of Management & Budget (OMB), Division of Purchasing, and the Division of Real Estate Management, and the Division of Risk Management. OMB provides financial management assistance to the County Administrator and other departments, and is responsible for the development, monitoring, and control of the annual operating budget and capital improvement program. OMB also conducts research, fiscal policy analysis for special projects, and management reviews as requested by the County Administrator and Board of County Commissioners. OMB also works closely with the Leon County Clerk of Court's Finance Department on the processing of payables and receivables. The Purchasing Division will provide the procurement capacity necessary to launch the proposed programs associated with Leon County's PRO Housing application. Leon County's Real Estate Division is essential for coordinating the process of identifying County-owned parcels that can be utilized for affordable housing.

The Tallahassee Lenders' Consortium

The Tallahassee Lenders' Consortium, Inc. (TLC) is a key partner of Leon County. TLC's programs have successfully evolved over the years to include HUD certified comprehensive homebuyer education, consumer credit counseling, post homeownership education classes, delinquency counseling (HUD certified) and "deep subsidy" loans. In 2020, Leon County, the City of Tallahassee and the TLC partnered to establish the CLT to provide greater access to homeownership to low-income households as well as create an inventory of homes that remain affordable in perpetuity. Leon County has contracted with TLC to administer down payment assistance programs for low to moderate-income first-time homebuyers. TLC's function in that process includes receiving applications and determining applicant eligibility. TLC will play a key role in the administration of the proposed Section 8 to Homeownership Down payment Assistance Program and the Homeownership Development Program.

Are you leveraging other funding or non-financial contributions?

Leon County’s grant request is \$7 million, and the County would provide a leverage commitment of \$5.26 million, which is 75% of the requested grant award. The Leon County funding comprised of State Housing Initiatives Partnership (SHIP) funding, Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA) funding and relevant personnel costs would be utilized for the next six fiscal years as leverage for the PRO Housing grant. Leon County was allocated \$759,021 in SHIP funding for FY 2025 and is expected to receive a similar annual allocation annually over the next several years. Approximately \$3.7 million in SHIP funds for down payment assistance, homeownership development, and home rehabilitation would be utilized as leverage for the Section 8 to Homeownership Down Payment Assistance, Homeownership Development in Neighborhood First Neighborhoods, and Enhancement of the County’s SHIP Home Rehabilitation programs over a six-year period. The PRO Housing grant would allow Leon County to serve more low-income residents.

The County was allocated a total of \$19.7 million in ERA in 2021 to assist eligible County residents with rent, utilities, and internet costs. The Leon County ERA Program provided assistance to approximately 3,150 households by providing more than \$15 million. In July 2022, the U.S. Treasury Department (Treasury) which administers the ERA program released revised guidance that authorized that a portion of ERA funding unobligated by October 1, 2022, can be utilized for “the construction, rehabilitation, or preservation of affordable rental housing projects serving very-low-income families”. Over the past 18 months, the County has utilized approximately \$2 million in ERA 2 funding to address gap financing need for the Orange Avenue Apartments Redevelopment project. As previously mentioned, in May 2024, the County also committed an additional \$175,000 of ERA 2 funds to the Tallahassee Housing Authority for the Springfield Apartments Redevelopment Master Plan. Approximately \$47,000 remains in the County’s ERA funding which would be utilized as part of leverage for the FY 2024 HUD PRO Housing Grant as allowed by Treasury. The ERA funding would be utilized as part of the proposed Multifamily Development Gap Financing Program.

Personnel costs in the amount of approximately \$1.42 million, including staff salaries over the six-year grant period, would also be included as leverage which is allowed by the FY 2024 HUD PRO Housing grant as an in-kind contribution to reflect the staff time that will be required to implement the proposed programs and activities.

Leon County Leverage Commitment (FY 2025 – FY 2030)		
Funding Source	Funding Amount	Leveraged Activities
State Housing Initiative Partnership (SHIP)	\$4,210,661	Section 8 to Homeownership Down Payment Assistance Program; Homeownership Development in Neighborhood First Neighborhoods; Low-Income Home Preservation; Portion of Staff Personnel
Leon County General Funds	\$1,004,765	Portion of Staff Salaries
Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA)	\$46,932	Multifamily Development Gap Financing Program
Total	\$5,262,358	

What permanent, long-term effects will your proposal have? What outcomes do you expect?

The long-term effect of Leon County's HUD PRO grant funding proposal would be the significant increase in the supply of affordable housing in Tallahassee-Leon County. If fully funded, our proposal will produce and/or preserve 525 units of affordable housing for low-income households (80% or below the local area median income) through homeownership and rental developments. More importantly, the units created will have long-term affordability periods (at least 30 years) and will therefore aid in Leon County's effort to permanently remove key barriers to producing and preserving affordable housing in the community. In order to measure success, each unit produced or preserved with the HUD PRO grant will be recorded and monitored by the Leon County Housing Services Division. Data collected will include the household size, the race, ethnicity, gender, and age of the head of household, the household area median income, and the location of the housing unit.

As presented, Leon County's proposal would reduce housing cost burdens for low and very low-income households without increasing such other costs transportation. The activities in our proposal are primarily focused on developing new homeownership and multifamily developments within our Urban Services Area. The Urban Services Area consists of multimodal transportation, the central sewer system, employment centers, high quality education facilities, institutions of higher learning, health care providers and human services resources. Our proposal best positions low-income households' access to the amenities required to enhance their quality of life and economic prosperity.

One of the main roadblocks to Leon County's proposed activities associated with the PRO Housing grant is heir property issues for low-income households in our community. "Heir property" refers to property that is passed via inheritance from an owner(s) to next of kin without clear ownership. Due to the lack of family estate planning, heir property is transferred via intestate succession, a legal process which determines how a person's assets are distributed following his/her death. Without clear ownership, it can be difficult to sell, finance, repair, or improve the property, as households that occupy heir property have trouble obtaining property insurance, homestead exemptions, home equity loans and building permits. Additionally, heir property can also affect a household's ability to benefit from the County's housing rehabilitation programs, as applicants must have clear legal ownership of their properties in order to be eligible. According to the Florida Bar Journal, heir property issues disproportionately affect low-income communities. In January 2024, the Board adopted the strategic initiative to enhance the County's affordable housing programs to provide legal assistance and consultation to residents with heir property issues and estate planning needs that will preserve affordable housing for low-income families. In support of the Board's strategic initiative to address heir property issues in Leon County, the County has allocated FY 2025 SHIP funds to provide title clearing services to income-eligible heirs through a partnership with a qualified legal aid agency. The County will procure services from qualified legal aid organizations, such as Legal Services of North Florida, to assist low-income households with heir property issues. Funding allocated for heir property support services would be used to cover costs associated with locating heirs, and process serving and filing fees that would ultimately establish clear ownership. By providing heir property support services to low-income households, Leon County is clearing title issues for potential

applicants that could benefit from the proposed rehabilitation activities to be completed with HUD PRO Housing grant funding.

Additionally, innovative activities such as the Section 8 to Homeownership Down Payment Assistance program will serve as a model for our community as well as others in transitioning families from intergenerational poverty to long-term wealth. It will also provide opportunities to address long wait lists for Housing Choice Vouchers, which is a challenge for many other communities around the nation. Working with their local public housing authorities' self-sufficiency programs, we envision other state and local governments would develop consistent and repetitive outreach strategies that empower tenants to pursue the opportunity of homeownership through education and greater awareness. Also, critical to replicating this effort will be partnering with local financial institutions to provide Section 8 tenants access to the capital necessary to purchase their home.

Our proposal also seeks to address community resiliency of our environment. A significant environmental risk to our community as well as our region is the health of Wakulla Springs. Located approximately 14 miles south of Leon County, Wakulla Springs is part of the Floridan Aquifer system and supplies drinking water to our region. Wakulla Springs is also home to a diverse group of wildlife, including manatees, alligators, and a variety of birds. Water pollution from stormwater runoff, as well as nitrate-rich human water contamination through waste and pollution, seeps into the underground aquifer and trickles down and flows out of Wakulla Spring. For more than a decade, Leon County has taken several steps to lessen the contamination of Wakulla Springs including constructing stormwater systems; reducing the utilization of harsh fertilizers at County facilities and parks; and financing septic-to-sewer projects to connect neighborhoods adjacent to central sewer systems. However, most low-income homeowners that reside in more rural portions of Leon County cannot access the central sewer system and often reach out to our Housing Services Division for assistance with failed septic systems. The failure of these systems can directly impact Wakulla Springs by seeping pollutants into the ground. The Low-Income Home Preservation activity would allow for enhancing the resiliency of the home and the overall community by replacing traditional septic systems with advanced septic systems that are meant to help protect the environment by preventing pollutants from entering the ground and water table. This would be incorporated into anticipated rehabilitation activities, such as roof replacement, to be completed with HUD PRO grant funding and leveraged County Housing funding.