



## Agenda Item Summary

---

**File #: 24-00138**

**Agenda Date: 2/27/2024**

---

**Agenda Item Name:**

**Permanent Housing Pilot**

**Presenter:**

Dan Whitcraft, Facilities Director, (352) 258-1848

Claudia Tuck, Community Support Services Director, (352) 215-0038

**Description:**

Presentation on options in support of affordable housing for the homeless.

**Recommended Action:**

Approve the Permanent Housing Pilot program of container homes to be situated on the northern end of the County owned property formerly known as the Scottish Inn. Direct County staff work with Grace Marketplace, City of Gainesville, and other stakeholders to develop a master housing plan onsite at Grace Marketplace Campus.

**Prior Board Motions:**

11/14/2023- Motion to direct staff to explore the use of container homes at Grace Marketplace and to look at financial models and best practices.

**Fiscal Note:**

Budget in ERAP2 Grant Fund 230 – Affordable housing portion \$1,500,000 project 9232901  
Construction1 Tier

**Strategic Guide:**

Housing

**Background:**

On 11/14/2023, the Board of County Commissioners directed staff to explore a pilot project in collaboration with Grace Marketplace regarding shipping container permanent housing and best practices. Due to the spiraling housing costs and increasing number of homeless people, there is a need for safe and affordable housing. Container homes are seen as a viable alternative that can contribute to the affordable housing stock and reduce the number of unhoused persons.

Subsequently, County staff consisting of Dan Whitcraft, Facilities Director, Claudia Tuck, CSS Director, and Candie Nixon, CSS Assistant Director met onsite with Grace Marketplace staff to tour vacant land on the campus to deem its appropriateness for permanent housing, specifically container homes. The Grace Marketplace staff consisted of Jane Kupfer, Joe Jackson, Karen Slevin and the

Grace Facilities Maintenance Director. By all accounts, both County and Grace Marketplace concluded that container homes onsite at Grace Market is feasible. However, infrastructure capacity would need to be further discussed. Moreover, Grace staff expressed concerns regarding the potential impact to current operations at Grace relative to increased demand for service needs such as showers, laundry, and meals. A preference was noted for container units that would include a bathroom and some cooking capability. A full-service housing model would be preferred over one that would require support from the day center. A second meeting was held with Grace staff and Mr. Ken McGurn, Grace Board Chair and Kevin Spellicy to discuss a proposal to add double occupancy rooms in the vacant Empowerment Center Buildings, container homes and other affordable housing on vacant land adjacent to Grace.

On 1/25/2024, County staff (Whitcraft, Tuck, and Nixon) met with John and Vanessa of Welding to Recycle and toured their container home model and discussed pricing, options and model variations.

As a result of the collective meetings, staff noted the following concerns:

- a. Grace Board and staff are not supportive at this time of increased campus impact due to coexisting housing expansion.
- b. The City of Gainesville was not involved in the recent discussion regarding renovation of existing vacant buildings and in fact had alternative plans for demolition of certain buildings at Grace.
- c. Need to determine ownership and land availability for development of surrounding land.

Staff recommends that the County opt to continue development of the County's property formerly known as the Scottish Inn already funded for rehabilitation of the existing motel and to or have constructed smaller container-style homes on the north end of the same property. Site design for construction and architect/engineering for rehabilitation is already underway and funding has been established for the project. If approved, there will be a change from stick built to container homes when the developer solicitation is released. This project could serve as a pilot for other potential future developments.

This presentation and proposed pilot program were presented to the Affordable Housing Advisory Committee at their public meeting held on February 21, 2024. The Committee voted in support of staff's recommendation, as presented, to the Board of County Commissioners.