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## **Get affordable housing while it is possible**

Several years ago, the Sarasota County Commission approved an affordable housing overlay district as a major measure in addressing the supply of permanent affordable housing in the county.

This approval came when houses that a working family could afford were nearly nonexistent.

We're in a different real estate cycle now, when homes are more affordable once again. The zoning change proposed for this site, now known as Palmer Place, is not meant to address a narrow cycle in a market, but rather the adopted policy of providing a meaningful supply of reasonably priced homes for many years.

Real estate cycles aside, we know several facts about our economy. First, the wages of our workers have not increased at the pace of appreciating real estate in the last 20 years. Real estate taxes, insurance and fuel costs have risen at higher rate than these wages. Our current employment base is stronger in the service sector than others.

The need to be proactive in providing a long-term supply of available units is critical and timely, as I've seen what happens to land decisions that take too long. Opportunity gets lost. Land gets absorbed for another purpose.

For those of us dedicated to increasing the number of houses for working families, the County Commission's vote Tuesday on the Palmer Place rezoning will either indicate our government's willingness to be proactive about our county's long-term needs, or show housing advocates that our hands are tied in providing any sort of meaningful measures toward success.

Cathy Layton

The writer is board member of the Community Housing Trust of Sarasota County Inc.

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