



ECFRPC ROLL UP REPORT – January 2026

MARION COUNTY

Marion County's Housing Inventory

The ECFRPC engaged in a housing affordability project to aid Marion County in understanding current and future affordable housing needs. The project's final delivery was a 41-page document that details current housing affordability in the County and uses those same demographics to model a "balanced" housing stock for the year 2050. All data were sourced from the 2023 American Community Survey, and the information was used to create extensive graphs and tables that articulate not only how many housing units are needed but also which type of housing and affordability is recommended. Results showed that the current situation is dominated by single-family housing; however, the model suggested a shift towards townhomes and multifamily units to meet demands by 2050. Funding was sourced from EDA grants to help Marion County plan for resilient housing for its residents.



Rural Lands Protection Strategy Underway

The ECFRPC has partnered with Marion County and Stetson University to continue regional efforts to better plan for the protection of open space and understand how conservation and working lands can be better utilized for wildlife protection and landscape connectivity, flood mitigation, and other ecosystem service benefits. This project is funded through the

FDEP Resilient Florida Program and aims to identify rural land protection strategies for Marion County by using existing **natural resource vulnerability data** combined with **technical modeling through the Marxan tool and stakeholder engagement** through workshops to review findings, gather feedback, and refine recommendations. The resulting strategy will focus on:

- **Prioritization of ecosystem services and natural resource areas** that enhance flood resilience, preserve agricultural lands, and maintain open space connectivity.
- **Identification of gaps and opportunities** to strengthen land preservation, improve stormwater management, and protect farmlands.
- **Integration of results into adaptation planning** for conservation, agriculture, and regional resilience.

By aligning technical analysis with expert stakeholder input, this initiative will provide empirical data to guide Marion County's adaptation strategies and regional planning efforts, ensuring rural lands remain a vital component of environmental and economic sustainability.

Stay Tuned: Marion County's Rural Lands Protection Strategy Stakeholder Workshop #1 is scheduled for February 4th.

Items of Note and Upcoming Events

- The ECFRPC Hazardous Materials Education Program, funded through contract by the Florida Division of Emergency Management (FDEM), is sponsoring **Hazmat** personnel from Marion County and Ocala to attend the 13th Annual Hazmat Symposium January 12th through the 16th 2026. These first responders can network with other professionals in the field of HAZMAT throughout the nation, attending specialized training on the latest technology, and learn best practices regarding responding to and mitigating hazardous materials.
- The ECFRPC planning department is currently assisting the **Town of McIntosh** to update their comprehensive plan and conduct community engagement regarding how McIntosh grows and preserves what matters most for the next 25 years.
- **Diamond Awards Celebration February 25**, Brannon Center, New Smyrna Beach
- **R2C Leadership Summit February 26-27**, Brannon Center, New Smyrna Beach
- **Rural Lands Protection Strategy Stakeholder Workshop** – February 4th
- **Bugg Spring/Pinecastle Range Complex MIRR Kick Off Meeting** – February 11-12th

