



Building the Capacity of Nonprofits in Florida to Preserve Affordable Housing: MacArthur Foundation’s Window of Opportunity Initiative



By Stan Fitterman

The Florida Housing Coalition, in partnership with the Florida Housing Finance Corporation and the Shimberg Center for Housing Studies has been awarded funding from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation under MacArthur’s “Window of Opportunity” initiative. Florida was one of 12 recipients (out of 81 initial submissions) to be awarded funding from the

Foundation for preservation activities. The Florida Housing Coalition will use its \$475,000 three year award to provide in-depth technical assistance to nonprofit organizations wishing to begin a business line for the acquisition of existing rental units that have project based rental assistance. The Florida Housing Finance Corporation handled the process for selecting the nonprofits. Ten organizations responded; four were selected to receive the assistance – Ability Housing of Northeast Florida, Florida Home Partnership, Homes for Independence, and Miami Beach CDC.

those developments with project-based rental assistance are often the only way, other than resident-based Section 8 rental assistance, to make housing affordable for ELI households.

Ability Housing currently provides affordable rental housing to the Jacksonville community. Over the years, we have become more and more aware of our community’s aging affordable rental housing stock. Many of these existing developments have project-based rental assistance contracts with HUD. As these properties age, and are in need of capital repairs, their ability to provide quality housing – in compliance with HUD standards – diminishes. We have seen some of these developments lose their Housing Assistance Payments (HAP) contracts. Once these units lose their rental subsidies, they can and do become a blight on the community.

Ability Housing wants to assist our local and state governments in preserving these properties, in addition to meeting the housing needs of our community’s homeless and ELI households.

Ability Housing of Northeast Florida



Shannon Nazworth, Ability Housing of Northeast Florida, Inc.

The mission of Ability Housing of Northeast Florida, Inc. (“Ability Housing”) is to provide quality, affordable, community inclusive housing for individuals and families at risk of homelessness and adults with disabilities. Because the organization’s mission is focused on the affordable housing needs of households with extremely low-incomes (“ELI”) and those with special needs, Ability Housing has determined that the preservation of properties with project-

based rental assistance is integral to fulfilling its mission.

Although Ability Housing recognizes the importance of preserving all existing affordable rental housing developments,

Florida Home Partnership



Earl Pfeiffer, Florida Home Partnership

Florida Home Partnership (“FHP”) has been developing affordable single family housing utilizing the USDA’s mutual self-help housing program in rural Hillsborough and now Pasco counties for the past fifteen years. In doing so, FHP has successfully developed 400 homes serving families under 80% of the area median income.

In 2005, at the direction of their Board of Directors, we changed our name from Homes for Hillsborough and expanded our service area to include several central Florida counties to include Hillsborough, Pinellas, Pasco, Manatee, Polk, Hardee, Desoto as well as Hillsborough.

Due to FHP's successful experience developing homes for low and very low income homebuyers, we believe it is time to expand our business lines to include multifamily development; specifically preservation of existing affordable rental housing that is aging and has expiring affordability periods. Developments with expiring rental assistance contracts service families in the income range FHP has serviced for 15 years. FHP believes that it can serve a vital role in preserving these developments through acquisition and rehabilitation in rural and urban areas of the counties FHP services.

- The Shimberg Center for Housing Studies estimates that Florida has lost 5,601 federally subsidized units since 1993.
- There are currently 3,803 units with HUD rental assistance set to expire between 2009 and 2012.
- The Shimberg Center site provides information about properties including risk factors (expiration dates, REAC scores, project rent/FMR ratios, etc. <http://flhousingdata.shimberg.ufl.edu/a/preservation> http://flhousingdata.shimberg.ufl.edu/a/ahi_opt http://flhousingdata.shimberg.ufl.edu/a/ahi_det
- For a general overview of Florida's assisted housing stock, including a discussion of preservation risks, see State of Florida's Assisted Rental Housing report, at <http://flhousingdata.shimberg.ufl.edu/docs/AssistedHousingReport2009.pdf>.

Homes for Independence



Lori Kreisle,
Homes for
Independence

The mission of Homes for Independence, Inc. (HFI), a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, is to provide affordable housing to low-income individuals and their families and to increase the availability of affordable and accessible housing for individuals with disabilities, striving to provide individual consumer choice whenever possible. Because of our affiliation with Abilities Inc., (a non-profit organization with a mission to provide indi-

viduals with disabilities an exceptional service delivery experience through innovative and valued employment, training, rehabilitation and support services) HFI is a member of the ServiceSource Network, and leverages the resources and expertise of the affiliation of non-profit organizations supporting people with disabilities in 10 states from Florida to Delaware to Colorado as well as the District of Columbia.

HFI's current programs and services include scattered-site affordable rental condominium units, assistance with homeownership for low-income individuals, property management, property maintenance, condominium association management, property renovations, accessibility modifications and repairs, and low-interest home improvement loans. We currently operate a total of 15 Section 811 corporations in Florida. Individual corporations are acquired, renovated and developed by HFI through the sponsorship of Abilities, Inc. of Florida. We also expanded our affordable housing services to North Carolina with our first HUD Section 811 award there in the fall of 2003. Due to our experience with working with project-based rental assistance under the 811 program, the preservation of existing assisted rental housing is a logical extension of our work and in line with our mission.

Miami Beach CDC



Roberto Datorre,
Miami Beach CDC

Founded in 1981 by the Miami Design Preservation League, MBCDC spearheaded the revitalization of the Art Deco District, public and private investment on Ocean Drive and Lincoln Road and the re-emergence of South Beach as a world class tourist destination. MBCDC now works throughout Miami Beach and the region to celebrate an extraordinary architectural and urban

endowment, revitalize distressed neighborhood, create increased economic opportunity, rehabilitate affordable housing and improve the quality of life for those who live, work and visit the City.

Organized with a commitment to preservation and urban design, MBCDC uses a holistic approach to institute a balanced and comprehensive program of community development. The Homeownership Assistance Program has helped over 280 families purchase a home by providing training, counseling, favorable financing and downpayment assistance. The agency will soon reach a milestone of 250 additional units that it has developed and operates as rental housing for elderly and special needs clientele.

The Miami Beach CDC is committed to the preservation of residential neighborhoods and the development of safe, decent and affordable housing for low and moderate income residents. Over the next five years, the agency hopes to expand its reach into Miami Dade County and continue its mission by increasing the affordable rental stock through the acquisition, preservation and renovation of aging and/or historic buildings.

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