

Member Spotlight. . . SFCDC's Successful Public Engagement

The Florida Housing Coalition is pleased to highlight one of our member organizations that has been integral to the success of the Florida Nonprofit Housing Advocates Network. The South Florida Community Development Coalition (SFCDC) assisted in the SHIP Roundtable at the 2011 conference, readying members to meet with legislators and advocate for housing trust fund monies. The SFCDC has been an active member of the Florida Nonprofit Housing Advocates Network since September.

SFCDC has increased member engagement with state legislators, educating the latter on the need to preserve the



Andrea Baker Dean (R), SFCDC Assistant Director, talks legislative advocacy with Suzanne Cabrera, Housing Leadership Council of Palm Beach County Executive Director (L), and Susan Leigh, The Community Concepts Group, Inc. Principal, during the FHC 2011 Conference.

neighborhoods they've developed. In 2011, SFCDC staff and members met at least once with 19 of the 24 delegates from Miami-Dade or their staff, and twice with nine of these delegates.

The work of community development – creating affordable housing and economic opportunities for all – is never easy. Beyond the innate challenges, the environment in which community developers and affordable housing providers operate can help or hinder the work. The presence or absence of public and private support affects funding, regulations, and public engagement in community development. Often, individual organizations find it difficult to influence these environmental factors for the better. Community developers in Miami-Dade responded to this challenge by creating the SFCDC.

SFCDC was incorporated in 2007 by a dedicated group representing local nonprofits, funders, and legal services. The group saw the need for an organization that could lead a cohesive effort to improve the operating environment for community development. Since then, the organization has grown to over 55 members, with two staff people, a 15-member Board of Directors, and a five-member Advisory Council. SFCDC trains, advocates, and partners to improve the performance of community developers throughout Miami-Dade County, in part by expanding support for their work.



Annie Lord, SFCDC Executive Director, participating in the Public Policy Plenary at the 2011 FHC Conference.

On the local level, SFCDC is building relationships with county and city elected leaders, and improving communication with the community development staff of these local governments. During a recent election campaign for a new county mayor, SFCDC staff and members met with the four leading candidates to express our expectation that any new mayor would be committed to affordable housing and community development. SFCDC also brings together local partners on behalf of federal funding. The organization urged Miami-Dade County to add support for community development programs, such as CDBG and HOME, to its 2012 Federal Legislative Agenda. Ultimately, the county did include these programs in its agenda.

SFCDC's value is best described by its members. Denis Russ, Director of Community Development for Miami Beach CDC and a member of SFCDC's Board of Directors, says that as a member, he is "better informed about the nuances of local government activities and changes in their policies" relating to community development. With this knowledge and the strength of working as a group, SFCDC's members are much better positioned to influence policy and expand support for their work. **HNN**