



Tribute to Shirley Taylor-Prakelt

Housing and Community Development Director receives award from the Florida Housing Coalition



Davie Town Council members Mike Crowley, Bryan Caletka, Susan Starkey, Marlon Luis; Mayor Tom Truex; Housing & Community Development Director Shirley Taylor-Prakelt; Aida Andujar from the Florida Housing Coalition; Town Administrator Gary Shimun; Town Attorney John Rayson.

“Nothing is going to stop me this time!...” she said the morning of the meeting. “I can't wait to stand there proudly (even if shakily) to be so honored by the Florida Housing Coalition. This means more to me than you know. I am both honored and humbled by this tribute.”

The Florida Housing Coalition Board rarely presents housing awards, but in those instances when a program or person embodies best practices for the rest of the state, the Board will recognize that program or person to serve as a model for others. The Town of Davie’s Housing and Community Development Director is a public servant who serves as such a model for her exceptional dedication to ensuring that all of the Town’s residents are properly housed.

Although every local government in Florida is charged with ensuring that their residents are properly housed, many fail to use their best efforts to do so. The Town of Davie, in large part due to Ms. Taylor-Prakelt’s passion and professionalism, has been at the forefront of addressing one of the state’s most pressing housing issues: the displacement of mobile home park residents.

The Town of Davie adopted a moratorium on mobile home park closures, finding that the inadequate supply of housing for those who would be displaced from park closures created a housing crisis. The Town appointed a task force comprised of an equal number of mobile home park owner and mobile home park resident interests. Ms. Taylor-Prakelt staffed the task force and oversees the implementation of the relocation plan ordinance and inclusionary housing ordinance that were ultimately adopted by the Town Council. Currently, the Town of Davie is facing the largest mobile home park closure in its history- some 3,000 residents are facing displacement from the impending closure of the Palma Nova Mobile Home Park. Ms. Taylor-Prakelt is committed to ensuring that these Davie residents, including over 250 children are able to find suitable housing.

Affordable housing advocates and professionals look to Ms. Taylor -Prakelt as an affordable housing expert and praise her for being the voice of those that lack representation and resources. In the State of Florida among affordable housing practitioners, Shirley is known for her passion, conviction and for always standing up for what is right and fair. She is a role model and has been a mentor to many in this field. I say that with first hand knowledge because she has been a mentor to me.

When I was 21 years old, Shirley hired me as a Housing Counselor with the City of Hialeah. I worked under Shirley's supervision for many years. At that young age she taught me the fundamental values of what it takes to run a good program. I was taught to be ethical, to respect the rights of others, to fight for what is right, to never compromise my character and to always comply with the letter of the law. I served the City of Hialeah for 27 years until I retired and I am proud of what we accomplished in the area of affordable housing. I can thank Shirley for the values she instilled in me at such a young age. I was taught to care about whether families had enough to eat or a place to sleep. I learned that we need to fight for those who are less fortunate and who depend on us, affordable housing advocates, for solutions to their affordable housing needs. That foundation, formed over 28 years ago has allowed me to do the work that I do today through the Florida Housing Coalition. Shirley is not just a mentor, she is a friend and it is with such honor that I presented her with this award on behalf of the Florida Housing Coalition.



Shirley Taylor-Prakelt with Aida Andujar of the Florida Housing Coalition

Aida Andujar, Florida Housing Coalition

"I think that I will now consider this to be one of my finest achievements. As a widow with no children, the only thing I have to leave behind is my good name and reputation. Thank you from the bottom of my heart for being such a special person, who I now feel sure will carry on my legacy." - Shirley Taylor-Prakelt



Attorney Mitchell Chester is also well known for his legal advocacy on behalf of mobile home park residents and presented at the Florida Housing Coalition's mobile home park preservation workshop.

Shirley is a tireless advocate for workforce and affordable housing in the Town of Davie. Her depth of knowledge, experience and expertise have inspired and educated the Community, which admires and supports her efforts. Her knowledge of housing policy is unparalleled. Her dedication, and that of the excellent staff she motivates, have produced meaningful and tangible "real world" results which have housed low income and very low income families when few other options exist. Shirley's advocacy against mobile home displacement is an inspiring story of conviction and hard work to produce meaningful solutions. She understands the key role that a healthy housing policy, for all income levels, plays in the overall economic and social vitality of the Community. We are all extremely lucky to have Shirley Taylor-Prakelt as our advocate, our teacher and our housing professional. She is a model for our Town, our state, and our nation.

-Mitch