



by Jaimie Ross

Heading into the 2013 legislative session things are looking good. No budget deficit. A recovering economy that has generated an estimated \$204.81 million in Sadowski state and local housing trust funds (\$53.40 million for state programs like SAIL, and \$151.41 million for SHIP) and an

Attorney General settlement that has generated an additional \$200 million in bank settlement funds to be appropriated for housing related activities in the FY 2013-14 session.

Housing advocates are weary from four years of near total sweeps of the housing trust fund monies. SHIP programs around the state have long waiting lists for funds yet to be received. Without a budget deficit, this is the year for SHIP and SAIL to be fully funded.



The Florida Legislature has a constitutional obligation to pass a balanced budget. So when the Legislature swept housing trust funds to general

revenue during years of budget deficits, we didn't like it, but there was a rationale. But when there is no such deficit? Using tax dollars in accordance with the purpose for which they are raised is the fiscally responsible course of governing. When the documentary stamp tax was raised in 1992, with the adoption of the William E. Sadowski Affordable Housing Act, it was for the express purpose of funding the state and local housing trust funds. Would the industry groups such as the Florida Realtors and Florida Home Builders Association have agreed to an increase in the documentary stamp tax to fund general revenue? Of course not. Not only did the Florida Realtors and Florida Home Builders Association agree to an increase in the documentary stamp tax, they actively supported it. They supported the tax because it came with a statutory promise that those monies would be used to produce and preserve affordable housing in Florida. When the monies deposited into the state and local housing trust fund

Housing Trust Funds Available for Appropriation FY 2013-2014

(\$ Million)

	State Housing Trust Fund	Local Government Housing Trust Fund	Total
Projected 6-30-13 TF Balance	\$ 3.79	\$ 35.17	\$ 38.96
December 2012 Revenue Estimate FY 2013-2014	\$49.61	\$116.24	\$165.85
Total	\$53.40	\$151.41	\$204.81

accounts are swept into general revenue it is the equivalent of having raised the documentary stamp tax to fund general revenue. Again, something the industry groups such as the Florida Realtors and Florida Home Builders Association would not have supported.

In this volume of the *Housing News Journal*, the Shimberg Center for Housing Studies provides the data to answer any lingering questions that legislators may have about whether Floridians need affordable housing. Our nonprofit and for-profit housing developer members such as Keystone Challenge and the Palm Beach Community Land Trust, Habitat for Humanity, Related Housing, and Sage Partners highlight the wonderful single family and apartment homes that can be produced and preserved for Floridians in need when adequate subsidy is available. The Florida Housing Coalition's Technical Assistance Director and COO, Stan Fitterman, addresses the need for SHIP funding in today's economy and how SHIP matches the right recipients with the right amount of subsidy.

So, in legislative session 2013, let's encourage and expect our elected officials to use the housing trust funds for housing. It's time. **HNN**

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