

Focusing on Housing Recovery at the Governor's Hurricane Conference

By: Michael Chaney



Almost 2,000 participants attended the Governor's Hurricane Conference in West Palm Beach to learn about the state of recovery in communities hit by hurricanes, how to deploy best practices in disaster recovery, and to better understand the immediate and long-term housing recovery needs of impacted families.

This was the first year the Governor's Hurricane Conference included a day-long track focused exclusively on affordable housing. Sponsored by Florida Housing Finance Corporation's Catalyst program, the Florida Housing Coalition's Disaster Housing Recovery Director, Gladys Cook designed and moderated a full day of training covering housing programs available to address emergency and unmet needs after a disaster. The program featured an overview of assistance from SHIP, along with FEMA's STEP program for providing temporary repairs and measures to make a disaster-damaged home habitable while recovery begins. Other housing finance programs offering temporary repairs, reconstruction, elevation and buyout were also addressed, including Low Income Housing Tax Credits, SAIL, Tax Exempt Bonds, and Rebuild Florida-CDBG-DR.

Presenters from Florida's legal aid organization discussed the resources they offer to help people stand up against discrimination and illegal evictions, navigate insurance claims, provide fraud protections, address property title and more.

The Governor's Hurricane Conference—and especially the housing workshop track—provided critical attention to the importance of affordable housing and housing recovery following disasters. Our expectation is that housing recovery will benefit in future hurricanes as local agencies better understand and deploy resources to address the immediate and post-disaster housing needs of Florida's most vulnerable families.

The final workshop of the housing track focused on post-disaster legal assistance for low-income Floridians. Disaster housing damage leaves many families disadvantaged and vulnerable.

Bill Johnson, director of the Palm Beach County Emergency Management Office and the Florida Emergency Management Association, served as the moderator of the conference's plenary session and addressed affordable housing. "How is your community addressing affordable workforce housing?" he asked.

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Affordable housing was a hot topic as participants discussed the recently announced housing-related requirements from the Florida Division of Emergency Management; local disaster housing plans will be a required scope of work item

in applications for the 2019 federal Emergency Management Performance Grants (EMPG). A state housing strategy must also be prepared.

There is no doubt that meeting housing needs is a crucial step to the long-term recovery of any disaster impacted community. Meeting those needs requires coordination, technical expertise, and preparation before and after a disaster. Through annual events like the Governor’s Hurricane Conference, communities across Florida can better understand what it takes to rapidly deploy resources and better support housing security after a hurricane. Housing disaster education and technical assistance is a core program for the Coalition. [HNN](#)



From left to right: Shimberg Center’s Bill O’Dell, Florida Housing Coalition’s Gladys Cook, and Enterprise Community Partners’ Laurie Schoeman. Schoeman addressed mitigation treatment for affordable multifamily housing and how property managers and owners can prepare. O’Dell discussed a prototype inundation data model designed to identify potential flood-related risks to multifamily housing.



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