



# MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

**ASHON NESBITT**

As we enter the second half of 2023, we find ourselves navigating seas and landscapes that look familiar and new at the same time. Our state is experiencing a population boom. This is nothing new as our state has always thrived on population growth primarily from in-migration from other states. However, this current wave of growth is different from past ones.

Instead of retirees looking to enjoy the sunset, this current boom involves corporations and workers, bringing their industry, higher incomes, and assets with them. This population influx adds a new dimension and new set of competitors for existing residents already experiencing difficulty competing in the home purchase market and expanded housing cost burden from skyrocketing rents. High housing costs are also contributing to local inflation. Indeed, our nation is dealing with inflation, affecting the cost of everything. The number of existing homes for sale, the go-to for many first-time home-buyers, remains low as high costs and rising interest rates have many existing homeowners choosing to stay put rather than sell. Higher interest rates, rising insurance, and other costs have also slowed down multifamily rental development, at least temporarily. Still, with tightening inventories, we know we need more housing production.

Enter the Live Local Act. Described as the most historic housing legislation since the passage of the William A. Sadowski Act of 1992, the Live Local Act, which went into effect on July 1st, brings record funding and a host of land use and property tax incentives for local governments and developers to accelerate the production of housing that is affordable for our state's workforce and vulnerable populations. This Act is timely when we have seen literal homelessness increase for the first time in many years, and housing instability and risk of homelessness affecting

low-wage earners and seniors on fixed incomes at higher rates than years past. In addition to the funding is the potential of the Live Local Act to attract and perhaps permanently expand the number and type of businesses involved in the development of affordable housing. A property tax exemption for new developments that do not receive funding from Florida Housing Finance Corporation is a clear indication of this. The prospect of new players is both exciting and unnerving as local governments brace for increased responsibilities, and nonprofits prepare to adjust business practices and form new partnerships as once-overlooked properties become prime opportunities.

Though we are passing over the threshold of significant change, we must carry some things with us. Permanent and long-term affordability must remain a key policy response, as preserving what we produce is just as important as new production. Embracing a mindset that establishes affordable housing as a permanent community asset will change how we approach development from site selection through financing and construction, and prioritizing housing in recovery from disasters. Also, housing development can support many goals, including building up small and minority-owned businesses, stabilizing communities through increased homeownership and affordability, and serving as a foundation for long-term and sustainable community redevelopment.

I look forward to what the future holds as we, the staff of the Coalition, move into implementing the Live Local Act - the focus of our 2023 Annual Conference - and we come alongside you, our members and partners, to strengthen Florida's housing ecosystem and achieve positive results for residents of our state.