Governor Rick Scott, during the presentation of his 2013-14 state budget recommendations in January, showed his support for local government affordable housing initiatives by requesting $50 million for the State Housing Initiatives Partnership (SHIP) program. This funding would assist approximately 4,000 families statewide who are eligible for various housing activities in their areas.

“On behalf of SHIP entities throughout the state, we are appreciative of this recommended funding,” said Steve Auger, executive director for Florida Housing Finance Corporation (Florida Housing). “As a result of economic and budgetary challenges that our state has experienced, the SHIP program did not receive state budgetary allocations for several years. If the Legislature approves this request, local governments will have resources to address the specific housing needs of their communities.

“Additionally, this funding would help bolster the state’s economy, generating about 5,500 jobs and an estimated economic benefit of more than $372 million,” Auger said.

Florida Housing administers the SHIP program, which was designed to serve very low-, low- and moderate-income families. Funds are distributed based on population to all 67 counties and 52 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) cities in Florida; the statutory minimum allocation is $350,000. Housing activities that will be funded include, but are not limited to, home purchase assistance, rehabilitation and foreclosure prevention. Additionally, many of the households assisted will include family members who are elderly or have special needs.

In June 2012, Florida Housing revised eligibility criteria and program benefits for the Florida Hardest-Hit Fund (HHF) Program. Since then, funding committed for the program has increased by more than 225 percent, with more than $232 million committed, to date, on behalf of participating homeowners, statewide.

Expanded program benefits are as follows:

- **Unemployment Mortgage Payment Program (UMAP)** will provide up to 12 months of payments, capped at $24,000, to the mortgage lender to assist unemployed/underemployed borrowers with their first mortgage until they can resume full payment on their own. In addition, up to $18,000 can be paid upfront to reinstate a delinquent first mortgage before UMAP payments begin. Total assistance available is up to $42,000.

- **Mortgage Loan Reinstatement Payment (MLRP) Program** will provide up to $25,000 as a one-time payment to the mortgage lender to bring a delinquent first mortgage current for a homeowner who has returned to work or recovered from unemployment/underemployment.

In March, Florida Housing’s Board approved draft term sheets for a Modification Enabling Program (MEP)/principal reduction program; the US Department of Treasury has preliminarily approved the terms of the programs, as well. More information on these programs can be found in the March 15 Board package on Florida Housing’s website by clicking here.

First announced in February 2010 by Treasury, the “Housing Finance Agency (HFA) Innovation Fund for the Hardest-Hit Housing Markets” (HFA Hardest-Hit Fund) provides $7.6 billion in federal funding to 18 states and the District of Columbia hardest hit by the aftermath of the burst of the housing bubble. Florida’s total allocation is more than $1 billion. For more information, visit the website at www.floridahousing.org.
As we begin the second quarter of 2013, it is hard to believe that the first quarter has come to a close. Florida’s economy continues to show improvement and Florida Housing’s programs continue to play a role in our state’s recovery. We’ve had some significant accomplishments during the last year, as evidenced in the 2012 Annual Report submitted to the Governor and legislative leadership in February.

- Florida Housing’s First Time Homebuyer Program paired approximately $214 million in loans with more than $14 million in down payment assistance to move existing for-sale housing into the hands of nearly 2,200 first-time homebuyers.
- Targeting rental construction financing to areas of the state where need and demand is justified, financing was awarded to help construct more than 3,900 new rental units, and for 2,800 aging affordable units that will be rehabilitated and recapitalized to last another 30 years.
- Through Florida’s Hardest-Hit Fund (HHF) program, foreclosure prevention assistance was provided to an additional 2,582 homeowners, which brings the total number served up to more than 7,400 since the program’s inception in 2010.
- We continue to participate in the National Foreclosure Mitigation Counseling Program, bringing a total of $10.3 million in funding to our state for foreclosure counseling since the program began; 37 local housing counseling agencies have used this funding to offer more than 35,000 sessions to at-risk homeowners during the past few years.
- Florida Housing refinanced properties out of the Guarantee Program portfolio and paid off outstanding capitalizing debt, which helped to reduce the outstanding risk in the program.

There is more good news we want to share with you from the year that was 2012. Please visit Florida Housing’s website at www.floridahousing.org to download the entire Annual Report.

Using information gleaned from last year’s audits by the state Auditor General (AG) and the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA), Florida Housing will continue to do the good work we have done. OPPAGA’s audit concluded that no change in the Corporation’s organization structure was warranted, which affirmed our transparent and thoughtful approach to allocating our rental housing resources. However, they suggested we streamline the funding allocation process for rental developments, and we concurred. You can read more about the changes to our application and allocation process on page four.

The AG findings were primarily resolved prior to the final report being published. Resolution of the remaining findings is incorporated into the statutory revisions being addressed during this year’s Legislative Session.

This year, Florida Housing will administer $45 million in National Mortgage Settlement funds for down payment assistance to first-time homebuyers ($35 million) and a foreclosure counseling program to provide financial management education for homeowners ($10 million). Also, we expect to debut a principal reduction strategy as a part of the Florida HHF Program.

Florida Housing looks forward to our continuing role in the state’s economic recovery, and working with our affordable housing partners to deliver available resources as efficiently and effectively as possible. Through the What’s Developing newsletter, you can stay abreast of how the Corporation is doing as we work to fulfill our mission to provide safe, decent affordable housing to Florida citizens.

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**REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS CLOSED FOR CATALYST PROGRAM**

The Florida Legislature established the Affordable Housing Catalyst Program (Catalyst) to provide training and technical assistance for community development activities related to affordable housing. Florida Housing has the responsibility of providing this statewide training and technical assistance to local governments, not-for-profit corporations, public housing authorities, and community-based organizations for the administration and implementation of the State Housing Initiatives Partnership (SHIP) Program, the Home Investment Partnerships (HOME) Program, the Florida Hardest-Hit Fund (HHF) and other affordable housing programs.

Florida Housing recently solicited responses through a Request for Proposals (RFP) process to deliver Catalyst services. The Corporation expects to select one or more offerors that propose to provide all or some of the services specified in the RFP. Each offeror selected must have as its primary mission the provision of affordable housing training and technical assistance, an ability to provide training and technical assistance statewide, and a proven track record of successfully providing training and technical assistance. Responses to the RFP were due in March. For more information, please visit Florida Housing’s website at www.floridahousing.org.
On January 17, 2013, the Legislative Budget Commission approved $35 million for Homeownership Assistance under the existing First Time Homebuyer Program and $10 million for foreclosure counseling services from the National Mortgage Settlement funds to be administered by Florida Housing. The $10 million in funding will allow Florida Housing to implement the Foreclosure Counseling Program (FCP) to achieve the following objectives:

• Help prevent homeowners from going into foreclosure; and

• Provide at-risk homeowners with good financial management education to help them better manage their money and assist with credit problems, to foster financial stability.

Following the approval, Florida Housing Executive Director Steve Auger joined Florida Attorney General Pam Bondi, Senate President Don Gaetz, Speaker of the House Will Weatherford, Speaker Pro Tempore Marti Coley, representatives of housing assistance, and legal aid groups in a press conference to discuss the National Mortgage Settlement funding and allocations.

Florida Housing estimates that FCP will serve a minimum of 10,500 homeowners by fully supporting homeowners through the process of their delinquency resolution negotiations.

Florida Housing is soliciting qualified entities to provide services under this program; a Request for Proposal (RFP) has been designed to engage a contractor to provide training, technical assistance and evaluation services to housing counseling agencies that will be chosen to participate in the program. Then, a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) will be used to qualify HUD-approved counseling agencies to participate in the program as foreclosure counselors. Responses to both solicitations were due in mid-March. For additional information, please click here.

Florida Housing is continuing efforts to maintain funding for statewide housing counseling services through the National Foreclosure Mitigation (NFMC) Program. The Corporation applied for Round 7 funding in December 2012, requesting a total of $3,987,875 ($3,150,300 in counseling, $630,060 in program related support, and $207,515 in operational oversight). The maximum total request for this round of funds was $4,000,000, which will help to support 14,867 counseling units across 37 sub-grantees.

In total, 121 organizations requested more than $105 million, as follows:

• 18 HUD-approved housing counseling intermediaries requested more than $55.7 million;

• 29 state housing finance agencies requested more than $38.5 million; and

• 73 NeighborWorks® organizations requested more than $11.2 million.

The Corporation recently finished Round 6 of NFMC funding and is in the process of submitting the final programmatic report to NeighborWorks®.

As of December 21, 2012, the fiscal year 2013 appropriations bills have not become law, and the government is operating under a Continuing Resolution that maintains federal funding at fiscal year 2012 levels. Understanding the demand for funds to support foreclosure counseling around the nation, NeighborWorks® will move forward with the application review process for the seventh round of the NFMC program so that funding can begin once the appropriations bills become law.

Note: Round 7 of the NFMC Program is contingent upon the program being funded in fiscal year 2013. Provisions of the NFMC Program, as stated in the funding announcement, are subject to change based on the terms of the legislation.
FLORIDA HOUSING HELPS NEARLY 2,200 FLORIDANS ACHIEVE HOMEOWNERSHIP

In 2012, Florida Housing’s Single Family program office (part of Homeownership Programs) helped 2,187 Floridians achieve the American dream of owning their first home by providing approximately $213 million in first mortgage funds, supplemented with $14.7 million in down payment and closing cost assistance.

Single Family also brought back the Mortgage Credit Certificate (MCC) Program, which helps first time homebuyers save money through a tax savings for each year they live in their home. Using the MCC Program, homeowners can claim up to 50 percent of their paid mortgage interest each year as a tax credit on their federal IRS tax return. The credit is capped at $2,000 annually and any remaining mortgage interest not included as part of the tax credit is still eligible for the home mortgage interest deduction on their federal tax return. MCC is for first time homebuyers, non-first time homebuyers purchasing a home in targeted areas in Florida, or for eligible veterans purchasing a home anywhere in Florida. For more information, click here.

Lender and Realtor trainings on the MCC Program are held throughout the state; the most recent training was on February 20 for loan officers at Bank of America in Tampa.

The Realtor® continuing education class, titled “Affordable Housing Solutions: What Every Realtor Should Know” is also available. Click here for additional information.

L-R: Pictured here are Brian Livingston, Ralph Bobo, and Deborah Harrison, all of Bank of America, and Sandy Gaver, Florida Housing Single Family Programs Manager, at a lender training for the MCC Program.

CHANGES TO UNIVERSAL APPLICATION FOR FUNDING THROUGH FLORIDA HOUSING

The Board of Directors recently approved a Request for Proposal (RFP) competitive process that will offer up to 10 percent of the 2013 annual housing credit allocation for high-priority developments. As a result, Florida Housing will offer two RFPs: (1) for the Persons with Special Needs demographic category, with a preference for a development for veterans with special needs; and (2) for the rehabilitation or revitalization of Public Housing Authority developments in medium or small counties, with an emphasis on leveraging criteria of the housing credits. There was a public workshop for these RFPs on February 26 in Tallahassee. RFPs will open in mid-April and close in May. The RFP committees’ recommendations will be presented for approval at the June 21 Board meeting.

The expectation for rule development activities is to present to the Board of Directors a request to approve Rule Chapter 67-21, F.A.C., in April; and then, Rule Chapter 67-48, F.A.C., and a new procurement rule, along with the 2014 Qualified Allocation Plan (QAP) at the June Board meeting. Rule Chapter 67-21, F.A.C., has been expanded to include both multifamily Mortgage Revenue Bonds (MMRB) and non-competitive (4%) housing credits, which are two programs that are linked together.

Beginning in the summer of 2013, Florida Housing anticipates issuing a series of Requests for Applications (RFA) to award 2014 competitive (9%) housing credits. The current time table assumes that five RFAs will be issued prior to calendar year-end 2013 for Preservation and Non-Preservation developments, and then, an RFP for high-priority developments in early 2014 for up to 10 percent of the 2014 annual housing credit allocation.
GREEN BUILDING: Upfront Costs vs. Lifetime Savings

Florida Housing incentivized green building certification for the first time in the 2011 Universal Application Cycle (UAC). Developers had the choice of one of three green building certification programs: Florida Green Building Coalition, National Association of Homebuilders' National Green Building Standard, or Leadership in Energy and Environment Design (LEED). Each of these programs has required and optional features in categories such as energy efficiency, water conservation, occupant health, and building materials. Each program also requires verification by a third-party professional, who has expertise in green building.

One of the major hurdles of green building is the perception of high upfront costs. Studies have shown that building green adds between 2 and 5 percent to the total development cost. So, while there is a “premium” upfront cost, with these practices becoming more common, it is not as high as many people think it is. Over time, however, the savings from lower operational costs make up for this premium. In addition, green features typically have a longer useful life than their conventional counterparts; as a result, replacement costs also decrease.

To evaluate the potential savings of green building features, experts use a technique called life cycle cost analysis. This technique is used to evaluate the impact of green and energy-efficient building features over their useful life in terms such as energy used, CO₂ emissions, and dollars spent/saved. Due to the upfront investment for these features, many life cycle cost studies focus on the cost savings of green building practices.

In Research – Multifamily Housing Cost/Benefit Studies
Two noteworthy studies related to affordable multifamily housing that use life cycle cost analysis are “Costs and Benefits of Green Affordable Housing” by New Ecology, Inc., and The Enterprise Foundation’s “Incremental Cost, Measurable Savings.” Both studies evaluated several affordable housing developments that incorporated green and energy-efficient building features and found that, over time, the developments save money. The Enterprise study found that it cost $4,524 per unit to comply with Green Communities (a green building standard) criteria. More specifically, of that $4,524, the cost of incorporating just the energy and water conservation upgrades was $1,917 per unit. The lifetime utility savings from these upgrades is projected to be an average of $4,851 per unit. The New Ecology, Inc., study included 12 multifamily developments, and all but one was expected to incur savings over a 30-year period.

In Practice – Green Capital Needs Assessments
In a practical setting, life cycle cost analysis can be used as a decision-making tool as part of a capital needs assessment to determine if or when building features and systems should be replaced with a more green or energy-efficient alternative. This can help property owners make decisions that will make their asset both physically and financially sustainable. Florida Housing has contracted with On-Site Insight, a green Capital Needs Assessment (CNA) firm, to evaluate a group of 20-25 year old properties in our portfolio. Once the CNAs are done, we will be able to see what level of rehabilitation is needed on properties around that age. On-Site Insight’s green CNA includes a life cycle cost analysis for building features such as water heating systems, windows and doors, flooring, lighting, and insulation. Each feature is evaluated based on its initial cost, operating costs, and estimated useful life. Green and conventional features are compared to see if or when an item should be replaced, and recommendations are made. Green CNAs are more expensive than conventional ones, so Florida Housing will be evaluating the added benefit of having a green CNA to see how valuable they are.

The two studies cited in this article can be found online. For the Enterprise Study, click here; and for an executive summary of the New Ecology, Inc. study, click here.

Green Building News: The National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) 2012 National Green Building Standard, an update to the 2008 version, has been approved by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI). The new version includes changes in energy requirements, scoring structure and new incentives related to choosing lots in green developments. For more information about the new version, please visit NAHB’s website at www.nahb.org.
Communications staff at Florida Housing recently had the opportunity to interview Orlando homebuyer Katrina Ugarte, who went through the Mortgage Credit Certificate (MCC) program. Her success story is one that shows the American dream of homeownership is alive and well in Florida.

Taylore Maxey (TM): Thank you for granting us this opportunity to chat with you about your homebuying experience. Can you begin by telling us how you heard about Florida Housing’s Mortgage Credit Certificate (MCC) Program?

Katrina Ugarte (KU): My sales counselor, Jennifer Vidal, was the person who told me about MCC.

TM: When did you start looking for a home?

KU: I started looking online in December of 2011, but only started looking in person in July of 2012. I got in touch with my Realtor® Jody and her husband, Jeremy, in June and the search did not take long at all.

TM: How easy was the process for you?

KU: Since I had already figured out what I wanted in a home, it was a fairly simple process. I would say the most difficult part was continuing to be smart with my money, since I chose to do a conventional loan.

TM: How did the MCC program help you in purchasing your first home?

KU: It was a small portion of my closing cost to enroll me in the program. I completed a homebuyer education course that explained the importance of budgeting, among other important things first time buyers need to know.

TM: Great! Did you purchase a home, townhome, condo or duplex?

KU: I purchased a three-bedroom, 2.5 bathrooms, 1672 sq. ft. townhome.

TM: How helpful was your sales counselor, Jennifer Vidal, with Ryland Homes?

KU: They had everything set up to make it very easy on the buyer and provided their own lender. She was very knowledgeable, efficient and informative during the process. When it was actually time to close, my closing went very smoothly and I was able to move in the same day!

TM: Last question, what was biggest barrier for you during the whole process?

KU: I feel pretty blessed. My home was ready before they originally projected…closing went amazingly well…I got enrolled in MCC, which will help with my yearly taxes…and I love my home! The biggest barrier was making sure I kept up-to-date with the documents my lender wanted, and that was not that difficult.

“Florida Housing’s First Time [Home] Buyers programs allow buyers who do not [have] the resources for a down payment access to homeownership,” said Jennifer Vidal, sales consultant with Ryland Homes. “There is no greater satisfaction than being able to be part of someone’s dream of owning a home for them and their family.”

Keith Merrefield, branch manager for RMC Mortgage (a Florida Housing participating lender for approximately five years) believes the MCC program is a good product for homeowners. “RMC Mortgage has been a huge participant in the Florida Housing and Orange County Bond programs,” Merrefield said. “We have put a lot of people in to homes using these programs offered by Florida Housing.”
Staff from Florida Housing had the opportunity to attend the Volunteers of America (VOA) ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Pensacola Veterans Housing (PVH) development last summer. It is a permanent supportive housing rental development for homeless and disabled veterans. The majority of the residents live there for 12-24 months while they transition to a higher level of independence and functioning; however, some will live there permanently due to their ongoing supportive housing needs.

PVH became a reality through the use of both public and private partnerships. Several local organizations, elected officials, stakeholders, residents, and members of the Navy Color Guard came out in the Florida summer heat to celebrate this occasion. Among those elected officials in attendance was Representative Clay Ingram (R-1). Representative Ingram, a local Pensacola native, was honored to be a speaker and to hear the testimonies of those who have been changed by the stability and support the development has provided.

“I am amazed at what can be accomplished when all levels of government cooperate and work unselfishly with the private sector to serve the public,” he said. “It was truly touching to witness real Floridians, who have struggled with severe challenges, being given an opportunity to start life afresh. I am grateful to the partners involved, including Florida Housing Finance Corporation, whose financial resources made this possible in my community and in the lives of the residents of Pensacola Veterans Housing.”

Florida Housing provided $850,000 in SAIL funding. Unless, the resident has a US Department of Housing and Urban Development – Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) voucher, ability to pay the allowable rent is not a condition of tenancy. Ed Quill, chief of services for Volunteers of America of Florida, recognized Florida Housing for our significant support in providing funding resources, and facilitating and expediting processes to ensure that the housing was developed, on time, to serve these veterans with special needs.

Cypress Cove Apartments, a farmworker housing development located in Winter Haven, was on the cover and profiled in the 2012 Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) Yearbook. Receiving $13.9 million in housing credits and HOME funding from Florida Housing, Cypress Cove has 80 units that are all 100 percent affordable with 40 percent of the units set aside specifically for farmworkers. Occupants started moving into units in December 2010.

“Florida Housing Finance Corporation’s implementation of the TCAP* and TCEP* programs [was] critical to project success as housing credit markets deteriorated in the economic downturn,” said Steven Kirk, president of Rural Neighborhoods. “[Florida Housing’s] successful implementation of the tax credit buyback program and its mix of products is the fundamental underpinning of Cypress Cove projects. This innovation contributes to the project’s affordability to migrant and seasonal farmworkers engaged in Polk County’s citrus, blueberry, sod and aquaculture industries.”

*Cypress Cove Apartments Highlighted in 2012 LIHTC Yearbook

Florida Housing Finance Corporation | www.floridahousing.org
The National Council of State Housing Agencies (NCSHA) recently held its 2013 Legislative Conference in Washington, DC. Key Congressional staff and industry leaders discussed the issues affecting housing finance agencies (HFAs) in today’s economic climate. NCSHA’s Legislative Conference supports the organization’s advocacy efforts by offering a unified message to Congress around key legislative priorities for HFAs.

NCSHA is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization created by the nation’s state HFAs more than 30 years ago to coordinate and leverage federal advocacy efforts for affordable housing issues. What began as a small group of executive directors meeting annually has now grown into a powerful national association and advocate in Washington, DC, for HFAs and affordable. For more information, please visit the organization’s website at www.ncsha.org.

**CALENDAR**

**April 17**
Realtor® Training  9:00 a.m. – noon
The Realtors® Association of Greater Fort Myers and the Beaches, Fort Myers

**April 26**
Florida Housing Board of Directors Meeting  8:30 a.m.
City Commission Chambers, Tallahassee City Hall

**May 1-3**
Green Building Event
National Association of Home Builders National Green Building Conference and Expo
Salt Lake City, UT

**May 22**
Realtor® Training  9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Greater Tampa Association of Realtors, Tampa

**June 21**
Florida Housing Board of Directors Meeting  8:30 a.m.
City Commission Chambers, Tallahassee City Hall

**WHAT’S Developing**

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If you would like to submit a story for consideration in the next issue, contact Taylore Maxey at (850) 488-4197 or by e-mail at Taylore.Maxey@floridahousing.org.

Florida Housing was created by the Florida Legislature more than 25 years ago to help our fellow Floridians obtain safe, decent affordable housing that might otherwise be unavailable to them. Today, Florida Housing continues its mission by increasing affordable housing opportunities and ensuring that its programs are well matched to the needs of those we serve. We know that we cannot accomplish our mission alone. As such, we continue to work with local governments, non-profits, elected officials and others to help emphasize the importance of affordable housing in Florida’s communities.