



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT
WASHINGTON, DC 20410-5000

OFFICE OF PUBLIC AND INDIAN HOUSING

December 8, 2021

Marisa G. Button
Director of Multifamily Programs
Florida Housing Finance Corporation
227 N. Bronough Street, Suite 5000
Tallahassee, FL 32301

SUBJECT: Choice Neighborhoods Program Funding Commitment

Dear Ms. Button:

In May 2021, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) awarded a \$30 million Choice Neighborhoods Implementation Grant to the City of Fort Myers and the Housing Authority of Fort Myers. HUD previously awarded an Implementation Grant to the Housing Authority of the City of Tampa, as well as Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grants to Dade City, Opa-locka and Sandford.

The Choice Neighborhoods program is designed to address struggling neighborhoods with distressed public housing and/or other HUD-assisted housing through a comprehensive approach to neighborhood transformation. The program helps communities transform neighborhoods by revitalizing severely distressed housing and investing in and leveraging support for resident services related to employment, education, and health, as well as key neighborhood initiatives impacting local schools, early education programs, crime prevention, public infrastructure, public transportation, and other economic development activities. Choice Neighborhoods Implementation Grants are highly competitive, and HUD makes only four to five awards each year.

Choice Neighborhoods projects are complex and require funding through a variety of private and public funding sources including cities, counties and states. In general, for every one dollar of Choice Neighborhoods funds spent, seven dollars of other private and public funds are leveraged. To date, the City of Fort Myers has committed approximately \$8,000,000 in City GO Bonds and ARRA Funds to their project.

Tax credits are a critical component of the financing for housing redevelopment done as part of the Choice Neighborhoods program. Without it, many of our projects would be unable to move forward. The timely award of tax credits is even more critical as Choice Neighborhoods funds are made available by Congress for only a specific amount of time, which cannot be extended.

For this reason, I am writing to express our support for the allocation of Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) to the State's Choice Neighborhoods grants, as well as our

support for the prioritization of Choice Neighborhoods projects in the 9% Florida Housing Finance Corporation LIHTC QAP and application.

Together, Choice Neighborhoods dollars, tax credit equity, and other funding sources will ensure that the transformation planned for these communities can move forward and that residents will have an attractive, vibrant, safe, mixed-income community to live in.

HUD is committed to working with our Choice Neighborhoods grantees and their partners. Should you have any questions regarding the Choice Neighborhoods program, please feel free to reach out to me at luciann.blackburn@hud.gov or to Unisa Barrie, the Housing Specialist for the Fort Myers grant, at unisa.b.barrie@hud.gov.

Sincerely,

Luci Ann Blackburn

Luci Ann Blackburn
Director, Choice Neighborhoods Program
Office of Public Housing Investments