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Florida Ramps Up State Housing Trust Funds

by Michael Anderson // 2016, Spring



The Sadowski Housing Coalition applauded the Florida Senate and House of Representatives for coming to a compromise on affordable housing, recommending that \$214.1 million be appropriated from Florida's housing trust funds toward affordable housing for FY2016-2017. The state budget was finalized in early March with the Governor's signature.

The Sadowski Trust Funds have statutory dedicated funds from documentary stamp tax revenues, which were swept into the General Fund in fiscal years 2012-2014. Persistent advocacy from the Coalition began rebuilding revenues and this victory secured the highest revenues since FY2008-2009 for the State housing trust funds.

"With reports showing that Florida has more than 950,000 very low-income households and the largest share of renters – 31 percent – who spend more than half of their income on housing, this funding compromise comes at an important time," said Jaimie Ross, facilitator of the Sadowski Coalition, and president and CEO of the Florida Housing Coalition. *"It's time to use Florida's housing trust funds for the benefit of Floridians in need of a home, including hardworking families, the elderly, veterans and disabled Floridians living on fixed incomes."*

More than 30 statewide organizations, representing diverse interests from industry and business, faith-based groups, low-income advocates, advocates for the elderly, local governments, and growth management, as part of the Sadowski Housing Coalition, held a press conference on January 7, 2016, to call on the Florida Legislature to appropriate all the dedicated housing trust fund monies for housing in FY 2016-17. Speakers included a State Senator and Sadowski Coalition members, the Florida Housing Coalition, Florida Home Builders Association, Florida Chamber of Commerce, and the Florida Realtors speaking on the impact of the Trust Funds.

Florida Housing Coalition and other allies also released the *Home Matters for Florida 2016* report, which includes current data on housing costs in Florida, cost-burdened families, homelessness, wages,

and other factors that drive Florida's affordable housing need. The report sends a clear message: Fully appropriating the Sadowski Trust Funds for housing is one of the most powerful steps that can be taken to support low-income Floridians and the state's overall economy. If the projected \$323.96 million in Sadowski State and Local Trust Funds had been fully appropriated, the resulting affordable housing development would have produced **nearly 32,600 jobs** and **generated more than \$4.6 billion in positive economic impact**.

The funds will support repairing affordable homes, down payment assistance to increase homeownership, and housing the homeless. The Sadowski Act passed in 1992 and 70% of the funds go to the Local Government Housing Trust Fund for the State Housing Initiatives Partnership (SHIP) program which funds housing programs in all 67 counties and entitlement cities. A minimum of 65 percent of the funds must be spent on homeownership related activities; a minimum of 75 percent of funds must be spent on construction activities; at least 30 percent of the funds must be reserved for very-low income households (up to 50 percent of the area median income). Thirty percent of the funds go to the State Housing Trust Fund for Florida Housing Finance Corporation programs including the State Apartment Incentive Loan (SAIL) program.

Florida advocates know well that a victory does not mean you stop advocating. The Sadowski Coalition has outlined several key steps for its members and partners to take over the next year building a strong platform for 2017. Recommended actions include:

- Host a ribbon cutting for development activities supported by the state housing trust funds and make it a celebration, inviting legislators to thank them.
- Include the SHIP logo in all photos.
- Tell your story! And send it to the Florida Housing Coalition. Success stories profiling an individual or family or an effective program are encouraged with photos and videos.
- Personal statements from families living in homes that have been rehabilitated are particularly valuable.
- And legislators need to hear from constituents through meetings in their District Offices to share the success stories of how these funds are benefitting Florida!

For more information, go to: www.SadowskiCoalition.com



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