



CELEBRATING SHIP SUCCESSES

SHIP RECONSTRUCTION MONIES ENABLE AN ELDERLY HOMEOWNER TO LIVE SAFELY WITH HER FAMILY IN HIALEAH

When Martha Kitchen applied to the City of Hialeah for a SHIP Reconstruction Grant, she lived with her son, granddaughter, and two great-grandsons in a wood frame home resting on concrete blocks. Leonard Grandio Jr., the city’s Grant Programs Specialist, recalls his first inspection of 79-year-old Mrs. Kitchen’s home, “I was in shock that a family lived in the conditions that they were living in. When you walked through the house, you could hear every creak with every step taken. From the outside, you could see how the roof was sagging and bowing where the trusses were weakened.” During the design and permitting stages of the project, it was discovered that Mrs. Kitchen’s residence was the last house in the City of Hialeah that was not connected to the City’s sewer system. The home still had a septic tank.

Once the project began, Mrs. Kitchen was able to select the model of her new home with the architect and the engineers. The old building was completely demolished, and the City of Hialeah paid to extend the sanitary sewer line to the new house. All told, the home of Martha’s

dreams was built in an expedited four months—well ahead of the normal seven-month schedule!

When the new home was complete, the honorable Mayor Carlos Hernandez, along with several City council members, honored Mrs. Kitchen with a ribbon-cutting ceremony. The local media were invited to attend and celebrate with Mrs. Kitchen, who told the group, “This is a wonderful program and I’m thankful for all the City has done for me.”

The Kitchen family’s new home has numerous features to make it more livable. Mrs. Kitchen now has a handicapped-accessible bathroom with a low-threshold shower, grab bars, and plenty of room to move around. The front yard is sloped from the sidewalk to the front porch like a ramp, allowing for a zero-step front entrance. The interior has plenty of living space, and the home is more toward the middle of the property, providing her grandsons with a space to play that they didn’t have before.



SHIP MOVES OSCEOLA FAMILIES OUT OF MOTELS AND INTO HOMES

In Osceola County, many low-income families face multiple barriers to finding affordable rental housing—including low wages, lack of funds for security deposits, and past evictions or credit histories that make landlords reluctant to rent to them. With a shortage of emergency shelter beds in the county, many families are forced to live in motels along the Highway 192 corridor or double up with family and friends; they are effectively homeless.

A new public-private partnership using SHIP offers a ray of hope for some families. In 2012, Osceola County contracted with Transition House, a nonprofit homeless service provider, to develop twenty affordable multifamily units. Transition House used Neighborhood Stabilization Program funds to acquire the former Four Winds Hotel, a 54-room building on West Hwy 192. According to their CEO Tom Griffin, “We chose this location because it was in foreclosure, has a brick façade and gabled roofs, and is a 10-minute walk from shopping. It’s a win-win for everybody—the hotels, the homeless, and the construction industry.”

The redeveloped hotel, Victory Village, has one- to three-bedroom units with rents ranging from \$575 to \$975 per month. Two of the units are fully handicapped-ac-

cessible, and 20 percent of the units are currently occupied by families with a disabled member. The units feature amenities such as hardwood floors, Formica kitchen countertops and energy-efficient appliances. The complex also includes a laundry room and family play area. Right across the parking lot is the Community Hope Center of Osceola, a resource center that helps people experiencing homelessness find jobs, housing and utility assistance.

So where does SHIP come in? It provides security and utility deposits, which are often the missing link for families moving back into permanent housing. Osceola County’s Local Housing Assistance Plan has a strategy for providing up to \$1,500 in security and utility deposit assistance for families experiencing or at risk of homelessness. When the family moves out of the unit, the landlord returns unused security deposit funds to the County’s SHIP program, allowing it to assist other families with rental move-in costs. Nineteen of the twenty families currently living at Victory Village have received rental deposit assistance through SHIP, and some families received their first month’s rent through the County’s Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG) or Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) programs. **HNN**



SHIP OPENS THE DOOR TO SUCCESS

Like communities throughout Florida, Hialeah and Osceola County are excited to help even more families with future SHIP appropriations. SHIP funds often serve as a local match for federal grants like CDBG, HOME, and ESG, allowing these precious resources to be stretched further. These development and rehab projects put local builders, contractors, architects, and suppliers to work, while revitalizing neighborhoods and increasing the tax base. Finally, SHIP developments like Mrs. Kitchen’s home and Victory Village improve the quality of a community’s housing stock for decades to come. SHIP truly is a win-win!