

June 6, 2023

Florida Housing Finance Corporation
c/o Jean Salmonsens
227 North Branaugh St., Suite 5000
Tallahassee, FL 32301

Via email to:

Jean.Salmonsens@floridahousing.org

mayor@miamidade.gov (Daniella Levine-Cava, Mayor, Miami-Dade County)

district5@miamidade.gov (County Commissioner Eileen Higgins, District 5)

Dear Ms. Salmonsens,

I am taking this opportunity to provide comments to the Florida Housing Finance Corporation's RFA 2023-203 for Low-Income Housing in Miami-Dade County (MDC).

I am a stakeholder and resident of the Shenandoah neighborhood in central Miami-Dade County and President of a 501c3 organization dedicated to improving and leveling socio-economic opportunities, including for low-income housing. I live and work close to – and actually use -- the MetroRail stations of Allapattah, Coconut Grove, Civic Center, Government Center, Vizcaya, and Douglas Road, the named MetroRail Stations that the RFA instructs applicants to give priority consideration in your efforts to develop low-income housing in South Miami-Dade.

I believe you are mistaken in choosing South Miami-Dade County for priority consideration to construct low-income housing because that is not an area with a dire and critical need for such low-income housing. The need for low-income housing is evident almost everywhere in our county, but favoring development in South Miami-Dade excludes – and perhaps discriminates against – the urban areas in Central and North Miami-Dade, such as Miami Gardens, Allapattah, Liberty City, Little Haiti, Little Havana, East Hialeah, and Overtown. These latter are all areas where more than eight in ten households are very low-income and low- to middle-income. These are the neighborhoods with high proportions of renters and below-average rent relative to the rest of Miami-Dade County, including South Miami-Dade. I have worked in these central and northern Urban poverty areas, and strongly believe they should be prioritized. These are the communities that have been traditionally marginalized and are now some of the lowest-income areas in critical need of low-income housing within our county.

A study from Florida International University's Department of Architecture and Urban Planning found that:

“The region's housing affordability crisis is geographically concentrated. Miami's housing affordability crisis varies sharply across neighborhoods. High-income

households are packed along the region's coastline, where housing values are the highest, and there are also pockets of advantage in affluent inland suburbs. Huge disadvantaged areas with extraordinary housing cost burdens are sandwiched in between." (https://carta.fiu.edu/mufi/wp-content/uploads/sites/32/2019/03/Miamis_Housing_Affordability_Crisis_FNL.pdf)

Housing and housing affordability need to be at the front and center of the region's economic development strategy. The construction and development boom in Miami with new towers and luxury condos hides behind what our region lacks, and what is at the very center of its housing crisis: housing that is affordable for its growing cohort of low-income service workers. To concentrate the supply of low-income service workers in the southern part of the county is wrong, segregationist and ignores the housing needs of the residents of historically marginalized communities in north and central Miami-Dade County.

To transport low-income workers using the MetroRail stations of Allapattah, Coconut Grove, Civic Center, Government Center, Vizcaya, and Douglas Road so they can travel to work – but not live in-- South Miami-Dade is also wrong. North and Central communities deserve their own low-income housing as the places where they can afford to live, work, play and pray as equitably as anywhere else in Miami-Dade County.

Sincerely,

Islara B. Souto, MPH

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