

Keys Affordable Workforce Housing Initiative

Issue

The City of Marathon passed a resolution requesting an additional 300 building permit allocations from the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) for affordable housing to address housing needs following Hurricane Irma. There are not enough available building permits under the current regulatory structure to address this need. Therefore, DEO and the Florida Administration Commission will need to address this request.

Background

- Hurricane Irma destroyed older mobile and single-family homes in the Keys that served as housing for the workforce population. Even prior to Hurricane Irma, the availability of workforce housing was the biggest challenge for business owners in the Keys.
- DEO plays a unique oversight role in the Florida Keys, due to their designation as an Area of Critical State Concern. The agency is charged with balancing a myriad of issues when reviewing local development decisions, including the need to provide affordable housing near places of employment.
- State law requires that growth be limited to ensure that residents can evacuate within 24 hours in advance of a hurricane. To ensure the safety of residents, DEO models evacuation based on population projections. This modeling assumes that tourists and mobile home residents leave more than a day ahead of hurricane landfall so that roads are not congested for permanent residents.
- To manage growth, residential development is limited to what could be accommodated while maintaining a 24-hour evacuation clearance time. A complex process for awarding the limited pool of building permits (Rate of Growth Ordinance, or ROGO) governs development.

Proposal

- The Keys Affordable Workforce Housing Initiative will allow local governments to grant additional building permit allocations for deed restricted affordable workforce rental properties that agree to evacuate at least 48 hours in advance of hurricane landfall. This initiative will not interfere with the 24 hour evacuation model and satisfies the statutory mandate to provide affordable housing.
- DEO will allow up to 1,300 new building permit allocations for deed restricted affordable workforce housing throughout Monroe County, with an initial allocation of no more than 300 per local government.
- Local governments that chose to participate in this process will work with DEO to amend their comprehensive plan and detail the requirements for deed restricted affordable housing that receive these allocations.

Next Step

- DEO can present this proposal to the Administration Commission at the Florida Cabinet meeting in May for consideration.