

MONROE COUNTY

THE FLORIDA KEYS AREA OF CRITICAL STATE CONCERN (ACSC)



AREA OF CRITICAL STATE CONCERN: HURRICANE EVACUATION AND WORKFORCE HOUSING HB 1297/SB 1456

CHALLENGES:

- 1) **HURRICANE EVACUATION CLEARANCE TIME:** Due to its single egress (US 1), the Florida Keys must adhere to a 24-hour evacuation clearance time in order to ensure public safety in the event of a natural disaster (FS 380.0552). Every 10 years, based on updated census data, the State conducts new modeling to determine compliance with the 24-hour regulation. Florida Commerce recently completed that exercise. Florida Keys' constituents and stakeholders are currently examining the new modeling results and considering its future options.
- 2) **WORKFORCE HOUSING:** Limited land, strict building codes, environmental protections limiting development, and a predominant service-sector workforce combine to make affordable/workforce housing development a uniquely challenging responsibility in Monroe County requiring unique and diverse solutions.

- 1) **Evacuation Clearance Time:** In order to comply with the statutory 24-hour evacuation public safety regulations, the State and County in partnership limit the number of development permits. On a decennial basis, new modeling is conducted to gauge the impact of new population numbers against the 24-hour clearance time to ensure compliance and determine the number of new permit, if any. Florida Commerce just recently issued its final report detailing a number of modeled scenarios, resulting in a variety of options.

Monroe County seeks the following:

- **TIME TO ASSESS OPTIONS:** Florida Keys' constituents require time to publicly discuss and make thoughtful, consensus-based recommendations to the Legislature and Administration Commission.
- **TECHNICAL CHANGES:** Two small, technical changes/clarifications to the modeling criteria:
 - a) Modeling scenarios must include the resident population of the City of Key West.
 - b) Modeling scenarios must include mobile home residents into Phase One.

- 2) **Workforce Housing:** Workforce housing is a complex issue that impacts most communities in the state of Florida. It is a particularly acute challenge in Monroe County due to its environment and high housing costs. Private sector employers find it increasingly difficult to recruit and retain workers, especially within our number one industry – tourism, and its generally lower paying service sector workforce.

Monroe County seeks the following measures to assist with local housing efforts:

- **TOURIST DEVELOPMENT/IMPACT TAX:** Monroe County's tourism industry is a critical component of our economy, generating \$1.9B and employing 40% of our workforce. Monroe seeks statutory change to enable Monroe County (only) a one-time use of surplus proceeds from TDT funds for affordable/workforce housing for employees in tourism-related businesses.
- **LAND AUTHORITY:** To assist with new home ownership projects, we are requesting a statutory change to the Land Authority section allowing it to qualify buyers only at the time of purchase for homeownership units, in addition to tools to protect its funding and the future affordability of homeownership units that use its funds.
- **AD VALOREM TAX RELIEF:** To incentivize long-term affordable rental housing over short-term/vacation rental, or vacancy, we would seek authority to grant ad valorem tax relief to privately owned residential properties (single family and duplexes) that voluntarily rent affordably.
- **SHIP PROGRAM FLEXIBILITY:** Monroe seeks temporary flexibility in the SHIP rules that set a specific distribution to very low-, low- and moderate-income persons. Current housing prices are so high that very low- and low-income families cannot be qualified for mortgages, even for affordable homes. We risk forfeiting 60% of our SHIP allocation. Instead, Monroe seeks temporary (sunsets after 5 years) flexibility that will enable us to use the funds across all categories (very low, low, and moderate without specific category restrictions), enabling us to utilize our full allocation of SHIP funds to assist additional families.