



# Affordable Housing

By Joe Steckler, *President, Helping Seniors of Brevard County*

It is a beautiful day outside, but my non-walking body remains chained to a wheelchair. So, it's a good time to write about a topic we continue to kick down the road – affordable housing.

Little is written about disabled persons and affordable housing, so here is a short sidebar. Recently I received a call from a disabled lady in her 60's who has been a caring and productive member of our community. On January 1st she tried to renew the lease on her apartment, where she has lived and paid rent for the past 12 years. Instead of a new lease, she was given an eviction notice.

Having suspected something was afoot, she had already started looking. And, we are talking about a senior woman on Social Security looking for Section Eight housing. She was given a smaller rental with a tub, rather than the walk-in shower she needed due to her disability. Now let me tell you the rest of the story.

The lady had been living in Section Eight housing that cost her \$130 a month. The new place, smaller and with a tub, would cost \$330 a month. She DOES not complain, other than to berate a landlord who sold her home of 12 years, causing her rent to double in an apartment that does not have a walk-in shower.

Fast forward to already limited affordable housing. By that I mean housing that mid-income families need to rent – housing that used to be rented for \$1,200 a month and now costs \$1,600 or more. For many, this is not really affordable...especially for the disabled lady. She has no resources to meet increased costs and, if there is no longer any Section Eight housing, she could easily become homeless.

Can we solve this problem? Yes. The City of Palm Bay received \$12 million in American Rescue Plan (ARPA) funds, \$5 million of which was recently offered in a Request for Funding to for-profit and non-profit organizations assisting homeless persons and those needing affordable housing. At the same time, there is an empty building in Palm Bay, a structure that was first a hotel, then an assisted living facility, which might be converted to affordable housing for temporary renters facing homelessness.

Now, consider this scenario: the Director of Brevard's Housing and Human Services steps forward and says, "We will form a county coalition to convert this building in Palm Bay into affordable housing and build other affordable housing on County land. We will use the \$5 million from Palm Bay, monies from other Brevard cities if available, and the \$12 million left over from the County's \$125,000,000 in ARPA funds." Then our legislators could seek matching funds from the state's Sadowski Fund, which is

earmarked for affordable housing (and received \$400 million in 2022).

Without such leadership, we will never build affordable housing. The money is there if used wisely. Earlier I mentioned \$12 million in County funds. That \$12 million, my fellow Brevardians, was spent for County pay raises.

We have long needed a plan to build affordable housing. We want people to come to Brevard, but will they come if they cannot afford to live here? And, we will always need a way to assist those about to become homeless. That structure in Palm Bay could have been a starting point.

Contact Helping Seniors at 321-473-7770, at [www.HelpingSeniorsofBrevard.org](http://www.HelpingSeniorsofBrevard.org), or at P.O. Box 372936, Satellite Beach, FL 32937. (S)

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<p><b>Broadway Season Opening: Chicago</b> Oct 13-14, 7:30 PM</p>	<p><b>Killer Queen: A Tribute to Queen</b> Oct 21, 8 PM Party on the Patio 6 PM</p>	<p><b>Broadway Series: Stomp</b> Nov 9-10, 7:30 PM</p>
<p><b>Disney Princess The Concert</b> Nov 13, 7 PM</p>	<p><b>Foreigner: The Greatest Hits</b> Nov 20, 8 PM Party on the Patio 6 PM</p>	<p><b>TOM SEGURA I'm Coming Everywhere World Tour</b> Nov 25, 7 PM &amp; 10 PM</p>

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