



Should I Admit Defeat?

By Joe Steckler, President, Helping Seniors of Brevard County

Should I admit defeat? No, but in researching this article I came up with some grim answers on section 8 and section 202 affordable housing. First, we need a heck of a lot more work to make the system user-friendly. Second, and more importantly, it is way past time for the County and cities to work together with established nonprofits to address the issue. We have managed to kick the problem down the road until it has become of such magnitude that it will require some work in and out of the box to solve.

Section 202 housing, sometimes called subsidized housing for the elderly, applies to seniors 62 years of age or older. In all of Brevard County there are only six locations that are designated as Section 202 housing, and three of them are the Trinity Towers in downtown Melbourne. Currently all locations have waiting lists of two, three, or even four years. Section 8 housing is more complicated but has an equal waiting period and is becoming less available due to this type of housing being renovated and the rents on the renovated property being such that current tenants have been forced out and often become homeless. The Section 8 housing voucher program is not open right now in Brevard and you cannot even get on a waiting list. In

some cases, there is no section 8 housing available to those who already have their housing voucher. We need landlords and Brevard County to work together to increase the availability of section 8 housing.

Resolution of the affordable housing situation needs immediate attention. I applaud the work of the small nonprofit, Saint Stephen's Way, which has initiated an affordable housing project on Lipscomb Street in Melbourne, demonstrating that family friendly affordable housing can be constructed in a reasonable amount of time. If you doubt my words, take a moment and drive by the project. If you like what you see you might want to make a small donation. I should also tell you that the group has managed to build the entire project with private money and plans to pay off the project in about five years.

Now think what could be done with a half or whole penny tax directed to construction of affordable housing developments across Brevard County. While I think the tax should be collected as any other revenue source, I believe a nonprofit or taxing district should be established to

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