Member
Generosity
Speeds Keys
Workforce
Housing
Recovery

According to a recent cover story in *The Key West Citizen* titled "Keys Cottages Spark Optimism," "elected, community and business leaders came out en masse for the opening of the first of four new workforce homes under construction on Big Pine Key." More headlines from a variety of news outlets hail the project as a "Cause for Major Celebration" and proclaim it "Brings Hope to a Workforce Still Displaced."

The stories all cover the August 16 ribbon cutting ceremony of a Florida Keys Community Land Trust (FKCLT) project to rebuild the Avenues neighborhood – one of the last pockets of workforce housing in the Keys before it was devastated by Hurricane Irma – with quality rental homes that are built to withstand storms and will remain affordable in perpetuity.

Thanks to Member donations to our Florida Keys Hurricane Response Fund, Ocean Reef Community Foundation was an early supporter and partner in getting affordable housing up in record time. FKCLT was established quickly in the wake of the storm and the Keys Cottages project gained the support of the Monroe County Board of Commissioners with a unanimous vote in April. The ribbon was cut on the first house just four months later, no small feat.

I am proud to report the Foundation was instrumental in convening support for the new land trust and our match grant challenge helped cover construction costs on the first four houses, quickly securing the partnership of the Community Foundation of the Florida Keys, Florida Keys Hurricane Recovery Foundation, and United Way of the Florida Keys.

Four additional cottages nearing completion, another five in the works and 20 lots already owned by the land trust are providing a new model and the first tangible proof of progress, rallying Keys residents. As architect Marianne Cusato puts it, "You have to start somewhere, you have to show what it feels like. We're hoping these can be a catalyst for a larger rebuilding effort to address the workforce housing problem."

"A year later we're starting to see good recovery," according to Monroe County Mayor David Rice, "But this is really just the beginning of what we need." More than 4,000 homes in the Keys were destroyed or majorly damaged by Hurricane Irma. Monroe County Commissioner George Neugent estimates the storm's exacerbation of the workforce housing crisis has cost the county 10 to 15 percent of the workforce.

ORCF matches for gifts to FKCLT are still available. To learn more about the Keys Cottages, visit affordablekeys.org; for more on the match challenge, email foundation@oceanreef.com or call 305-367-4707.

Representatives of the Florida Keys Community Land Trust, Ocean Reef Community Foundation, United Way of the Florida Keys and the Community Foundation of the Florida Keys with a Keys Cottage rendering at the ribbon cutting celebration. Thanks to the United Way and CFFK for meeting Ocean Reef's match challenge to fund construction of the first cottage!