



# THE FLORIDA HOUSING COALITION

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## **Center for Racial Equity Announces The Winners of the Competitive Grant Application for Two-Years of Assistance to Close the Gap**

TALLAHASSEE, Fla — The [Center for Racial Equity](#), Florida Housing Coalition’s initiative that provides support for communities looking to advance racial equity in housing, announced the winners of its competitive grant program entitled **Closing the Racial Gap in Homeownership (Closing the Gap)**. Both the City of Fort Pierce, and the City of West Palm Beach will receive 24 months of technical assistance to help close the homeownership gap amongst Black and white families in their respective communities. The Coalition will be engaging with public and private sector partners and stakeholders to address the history, the policies, and the programs that impact racial inequity in housing and assist the community with implementing solutions.

White Floridians are more likely than any other racial group to own a home both free and clear or with a mortgage. At the same time, Black Floridians have the lowest homeownership rates in the state, and more than half of Black households are renters,” according to the Coalition’s 2021 Home Matters Report. There have been only small improvements in housing equity since the passage of the Fair Housing Act in 1968. Many municipalities are aware of the racial gap in homeownership and are looking for viable solutions.

### **The City of Fort Pierce is Ready for Change**

“A stark racial divide in homeownership and housing affordability exists within the City of Fort Pierce,” stated the City in its grant application. Embarking on an initiative entitled “One Fort Pierce” – the community is dedicated toward bridging the silent racial and economic divide that exists within its city limits. With the recent success of their Local Foods, Local Places Initiative, the City has

a proven track record of implementing community wide solutions and garnering community wide support for needed improvements. “With a solid track record in place, and an eagerness to tackle the hard issues facing their community, the City of Fort Pierce is well-positioned to take advantage of the help that the **Closing the Gap** program can provide,” stated Florida Housing Coalition CEO and President Jaimie Ross.

### **West Palm Beach Communities of Color Need Affordable Housing**

“In line with my vision of working to create a community of opportunity for all in West Palm Beach, we are working to make the dream of homeownership a reality for all residents no matter where they chose to live,” said West Palm Beach Mayor Keith A. James. “This grant will help the city to continue its work addressing affordable housing challenges faced by people of color throughout our city. We thank the Florida Housing Coalition for this grant and are honored to have been named a recipient.”

Mayor Keith James, as part of his Taskforce on Racial and Ethnic Equality, has committed resources and city priorities to finding solutions for affordable housing within city limits. “The Mayor’s leadership, and the eagerness of the city departments to implement solutions for affordable housing has the Florida Housing Coalition excited about working with them,” added Ross.

**Closing the Gap** is the seminal program of the Center for Racial Equity. With funding in place from major underwriters Bank of America and Wells Fargo, the program provides a 3:1 match in technical assistance and resources over a two-year period. “Bank of America is helping advance racial equality and economic opportunity, with a particular focus on helping create opportunity for people and communities of color,” said Gene Schaefer, Miami market president for Bank of America. “Having a safe and affordable place to call home is essential to help lay the foundation for wellness, dignity, and economic opportunity,” said Eileen Fitzgerald, head of housing affordability philanthropy with Wells Fargo.

### **Save the Date: Annual Conference, August 30-Sept 1<sup>st</sup>**

The Coalition’s annual Home Matters Conference is focused on the work of the Center for Racial Equity and will have an afternoon focused on **Closing the Gap** in Homeownership. Taking place virtually again this year, the conference dates are August 30–Sept 1. [Early registration is now available.](#)

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