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Florida gets big chunk of federal aid for housing crisis

BY KIMBERLY MILLER

[Palm Beach Post](#)

Florida is receiving another \$208.4 million in federal aid to help improve neighborhoods hardest hit by the foreclosure crisis.

The money, announced Wednesday by U.S. Housing and Urban Development, is part of \$1 billion allocated nationally in a third round of Neighborhood Stabilization funding.

Florida's share is the highest of all the states, followed by California, which is receiving \$149.3 million.

The money can be used to buy land and property, demolish or rehabilitate abandoned properties and offer down payment and closing cost assistance to low- to moderate-income home buyers.

Included in Florida's stipend is \$20 million for Miami-Dade County, \$5.4 million for Broward County and \$11.2 million for Palm Beach County. Municipalities within South Florida also received individual awards, totaling more than \$35 million.

"We want to make sure people can move back into good neighborhoods," HUD Deputy Secretary Ron Sims said. "Neighborhoods where we can have good sidewalks and parks and programs."

The neighborhood stabilization program has already awarded nearly \$6 billion nationwide, and more than \$250 million in South Florida. While plans to spend the money differ among organizations and local governments, the general intent is to refurbish foreclosed properties and sell or rent them to low- to middle-income families.

In previous disbursements, agencies were asked to apply for the money with proposals on how it would be spent.

In this round, the Obama administration used a formula to dole out the money.

Factors considered in the formula included the number and percent of foreclosures, percent of homes financed by sub prime mortgages, and the number and percent of homes with late loan payments. Miami-Dade County's award of \$20 million was the third largest individual grant in the country, behind Detroit and Clark County, Nev.

"We have the ability to use the additional funds to continue the work we're doing. We'd like to do more homeownership [projects]," said Clarence Brown, who runs the NSP for Miami-Dade County.

James Miller, spokesman for Florida's Department of Community Affairs, said the agency knew the state was getting money, just not how much or what it could be used for.

The department was given \$8.5 million as part of Florida's share.

Miami Herald business writer Toluse Olorunnipa contributed to this report.

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