



*Dedicated to the preservation and revitalization
of Florida's communities.*

January 23, 2004

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TO: Members
FROM: Carol Westmoreland, Executive Director *CW*
RE: Lobbying Assessment

Another year has passed, and we are anticipating CRA legislation during the 2004 session.

The FRA has contracted with lobbyists to defend current local control over Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) powers and funding before the 2004 legislature. **We need your help to fund this effort.** Last year there was no legislation passed on CRAs, and we are working hard with the Florida League of Cities (FLC) and other interested parties toward the same result in 2004.

The Florida Association of Counties (FAC) has made it clear they will seek support for legislation mandating a one-size-fits-all formula for county contributions to city CRAs, limiting such contributions below current levels. The intent of these changes is clearly current CRAs and current tax increment trust funds. In the meantime, counties and cities are negotiating all over the state regarding CRA tax increment revenues. This is the appropriate way to handle any disputes between governmental entities over what is 100% local funding.

Proposals on the legislative table for 2004 so far include:

**Giving non-charter counties veto power over city created CRAs;
Limiting county contributions to the amount of "city millage" contributed;
Requiring the return of TIF funds to counties; (if no debt or when the increment exceeds an unspecified level) and
Including county contributions to city CRAs on the TRIM notices**

Our position on these issues is identical to that of the Florida League of Cities: We must preserve the flexibility that allows CRAs to be as successful as they are in revitalizing declining urban areas.

We want to make our voice heard during the 2004 legislative session. We are asking our members to contribute a voluntary assessment, in an amount deemed appropriate by you, to fund these efforts. To give you an indication of how much to contribute, the average amount pledged by other members has been \$1,000. These monies will be used solely for lobbying fees approved by the Board of Directors.

Thank you in advance for your efforts on behalf of redevelopment in Florida. If I may answer any questions, please let me know.

SAMPLE LETTER TO LEGISLATORS RE: CRAS
(PLEASE PERSONALIZE BEFORE SENDING!)

Date _____

(Insert legislators name

and address here: The Honorable _____, Senator or Rep.)

Note: be sure to send this letter to all your **Representatives and Senators**.

Dear Representative _____ / Senator _____:

We are asking for your support of **Community Redevelopment Agencies (CRAs)** funded 100% by local governments throughout the state. We respectfully ask that you oppose any CRA legislation this session, because CRAs are funded and operated locally. Issues that develop between cities and counties over CRAs are now resolved at the local level, and we urge you to help us keep it that way.

Amazing changes take place in communities where CRAs operate. Revitalization does not happen magically. It is due to the hard work, leadership and local funding by cities and counties trying to better the quality of life for their citizens. Hundreds of volunteers, citizen boards and elected officials have committed to turn around urban decay, without costing the state budget a dime.

CRAs have proven themselves to be an exceptionally valuable and unique tool for redevelopment. They are one of the only local funding tools used to encourage and enable private sector leveraging in blighted and deteriorating urban areas.

We are opposed to any effort that changes the way CRAs operate, and we continue to support Tax Increment Financing as a funding tool for local governments.

Let us share with you the successes of our local CRA. In fact, but for tax increment financing, the _(local project)_____ project would never have been completed. We would be happy to furnish additional information and meet with you on these issues. Please let us know how we may be of assistance at any time. I may be reached at _____

Sincerely,

Mayor, Commissioner or person authorized to represent the City/CRA

Cc: FRA office

(you may obtain an email version of this document from cwestmoreland@flcities.com)