

Affordable Housing Trust Fund Eyed For Hillsborough County

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Hillsborough County Commissioners Wednesday took a step toward creating its first dedicated source of money for affordable housing. It comes after other money has been repeatedly diverted from a state housing fund.

The move wouldn't create a dedicated trust fund, which supporters had pushed for. But the vote does direct Hillsborough County to try to find \$10 million in the upcoming budget, and every year after. It would help people who are being priced out of the area's housing market to cover the cost.

County Commissioner Pat Kemp said she committed to supporting the fund during a visit two weeks ago to the community group HOPE, the Hillsborough Organization for Progress and Equality. That group has been pressing for a solution to burgeoning housing costs.

"A few other commissioners went to the [Tampa Housing Authority](#) in the last few weeks and we heard something about their wait list," Kemp said. "What I was told the other day is their wait list - including their public housing and Section 8 - people waiting for it is 22,000 people in Hillsborough County."

The vote doesn't make this a done deal. At least two commissioners said they don't support locking in recurring money, in case a disaster hits and funds must be diverted.

Beth Veeneman is with St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Tampa, as well as HOPE. She said the group has been lobbying county commissioners for six years to create a dedicated housing fund.

"For a community of our size, and with a severe housing crisis that we have, we probably need \$100 million dollars a year to solve this crisis," she told commissioners. "But \$10 million annually will make a substantial difference in the development of needed housing in our county."



Pastor Stephen Kauffman of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Tampa addresses county commissioners. [Hillsborough County TV](#)