



## ***Housing & Human Services Department***

**DIVISION OF PUBLIC SERVICES ADMINISTRATION**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Housing Assistance Applications Resume**

The Housing and Human Services Department is now accepting new applications for housing assistance as part of SHIP also known as the State Housing Initiative Partnership Program. In late August, the department temporarily suspended SHIP down payment assistance to reevaluate the program's guidelines.

This came as a result of home values recently dropping while housing down payment assistance remained in sync with the 2005 real estate market. In recent months, demand for housing financial help had begun to outpace available SHIP dollars.

Until August of 2008, SHIP provided assistance to clients after they were already under contract to purchase a home and working with a banking institution. This week, Housing and Human Services is re-launching the SHIP Program with several changes including the requirement that future homeowners seeking assistance pre-qualify for a mortgage amount with Collier County before initiating any loan or purchase.

**Under SHIP's revised guidelines**, persons seeking housing assistance will begin their journey for a new home by visiting the Housing and Human Services Department. Here, a SHIP representative will pre-qualify people based on their income and debt to establish a maximum purchase price. This tells the client what he or she can afford. Using the maximum purchase price, Collier County will then partner with clients providing up to a four-percent loan for first-home purchase assistance. During the pre-qualifying process, it will be determined if clients meet state guidelines for assistance.

Even if a customer decides to purchase a home at a higher value than the pre-qualified maximum purchase price, Collier County's Housing and Human Services Department will provide assistance based on the pre-qualified amount or the final purchase price of a home, whichever amount is less.

Housing and Human Services Housing Manager Buddy Ramsey said these changes will spread funding to help more families. "Closing costs can be a deal breaker for many first-time buyers, so we are happy to give them this four percent loan as a friendly enhancement into affordable homeownership."

The department provided \$5,061,319.68 in down payment assistance from July 1, 2007 to June 30, 2008 in contrast to approximately \$2 million the previous year.

Pre-qualification is a free service for the public provided by the Housing and Human Services Department. The public may visit [www.colliergov.net/housing](http://www.colliergov.net/housing) or call (239) 252-HOME (4663) for information.

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