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## OTTED Has Taken Steps to Enhance the Florida Resource Directory

### *at a glance*

Since our 2005 report, the Governor's Office of Tourism, Trade, and Economic Development (OTTED) has taken steps to enhance the Florida Resource Directory to better serve as a comprehensive and current source of information on the state's community revitalization programs. Although OTTED has continued efforts to promote the Florida Resource Directory, it should continue to work with its state agency partners to ensure that state community revitalization programs' webpages include links to the directory.

### Scope

In accordance with state law, this progress report informs the Legislature of actions taken in response to a 2005 OPPAGA report on the state's urban revitalization programs.<sup>1,2</sup> This report presents our assessment of the extent to which the Governor's Office of Tourism, Trade, and Economic Development (OTTED) has addressed the findings and recommendations included in our report.

<sup>1</sup> Section 11.51(6), *F.S.*

<sup>2</sup> *Locals Find State Urban Revitalization Programs Useful; More Centralized Program Information Would Be Helpful*, [Report No. 05-32](#), May 2005.

### Background

Many urban communities have distressed areas that suffer from high crime rates, dilapidated buildings, poor infrastructure, and high unemployment. These conditions reduce residents' quality of life and make the areas less attractive to private sector investment, thereby discouraging private revitalization efforts. Local governments are primarily responsible for redevelopment of distressed urban communities. However, the state has created several programs to aid local government revitalization efforts. These programs include the Enterprise Zone Program, the Brownfield Redevelopment Program, the Front Porch Florida Initiative, the Florida Main Street Program, the Urban Infill and Redevelopment Program, the State Community Contribution Tax Credit Program, and the State Housing Initiative Partnership.

Our 2005 report concluded that local governments used the state's redevelopment programs, in conjunction with other federal and local programs, to help package deals for revitalizing distressed urban communities. While the state programs did not directly provide large amounts of funds, they were viewed as being useful in helping leverage other funding support and in demonstrating government commitment to revitalization. Florida's programs also were viewed as being useful in helping local governments get community and private sector buy-in on revitalization projects.

However, our 2005 report also found that state revitalization programs were fragmented among multiple agencies and there was little coordination in marketing the programs' services.<sup>3</sup> Consequently, local government officials had difficulty in accessing current and comprehensive information about state programs and resources.

To address this problem, we recommended that OTTED work with other state entities that administer revitalization programs to enhance the Florida Resource Directory. This directory ([www.floridaresourcedirectory.org](http://www.floridaresourcedirectory.org)) is maintained by OTTED and is an online database that is intended to help distressed rural and urban community representatives find and access sources of assistance. The site includes a searchable list of many state, federal, and local programs, grants, and other resources. We also recommended that

- OTTED ensure that the directory contains information on all state urban revitalization programs;
- OTTED enter into agreements with other state entities to market the resource directory, as few local government representatives were aware of it; and
- state entities administering urban revitalization programs add links to the directory on their individual program websites.

## Current Status

The Office of Tourism, Trade, and Economic Development has made progress in addressing our recommendations.

<sup>3</sup> These programs are administered by the Department of Community Affairs; the Department of Environmental Protection; the Department of State; the Florida Housing Finance Corporation; Governor's Office of Tourism, Trade, and Economic Development; and Enterprise Florida, Inc. The Urban Infill and Redevelopment Program has not been funded since Fiscal Year 2000-01.

With the exception of the Front Porch Florida Initiative, the Florida Resource Directory presently contains current information on each of the state's urban revitalization programs. This information includes the program's purpose, type of assistance, available funding, eligibility requirements, the application process, and contact information. OTTED is now updating the resource directory annually using information obtained from state agencies and from the Florida League of Cities' resource directory. OTTED staff report that they also add information to the directory as new resources are identified.

OTTED has promoted the Florida Resource Directory through a network of agency partners. These partners include the state agencies that administer urban revitalization programs and participants in the Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI) and their stakeholder groups, which serve urban as well as rural areas of the state. In addition, OTTED has formed a partnership with the Department of Community Affairs and Florida State University to include directory information in the Resource Identification Strategy database. This database contains information on various funding sources that can be used for disaster preparedness, response, mitigation, recovery, and long-term redevelopment projects.

However, most of the websites for the state's individual revitalization programs still do not have links to the Florida Resource Directory. For example, the webpage for the Department of Environmental Protection's Brownfield Redevelopment Program does not have a link to the directory. Currently, only the Enterprise Zone Program and the Florida Main Street Program websites contain links to the directory. OTTED staff said they will work with agencies to ensure they include links to the directory on their program's websites.

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**Florida Monitor:** [www.oppaga.state.fl.us](http://www.oppaga.state.fl.us)

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