

# Board of County Commissioners

## Agenda Request

Date of Meeting: April 21, 2009

Date Submitted: April 17, 2009

To: Honorable Chairman and Members

From: Benjamin H. Pingree, County Administrator  
Tim Barden, Assistant County Administrator  
Eva Thorpe, Grants Coordinator

Subject: Board Direction on Proposed Project for Submission of Grant Application to the Florida Communities Trust - Florida Forever Program

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### **Statement of Issue:**

This agenda item is a follow up to the requests made by the Board for staff to identify suitable project(s) for the Board's direction for making application (Attachment #1) to the Florida Communities Trust (FCT), Florida Forever grant Program (Attachment #2).

### **Background:**

At the April 7, 2009 meeting, the Board directed staff to pursue a grant application with the Florida Communities Trust (FCT)-Forever Florida Program. The Board directed staff to research potential projects that could be brought back for their consideration prior to the application deadline of May 13, 2009.

The FCT was established in 1989 by the Florida Legislature to help local governments meet the need for preservation of green space, including parks, open space, beaches and natural areas. For the first ten years, the FCT was funded primarily through the Preservation 2000 Bond Program, which was dedicated to the purchase of sensitive lands throughout the state. In 1999, the Florida Legislature approved the FCT as the successor program to Preservation 2000 and the FCT continues to assist communities, as well as non-profit environmental organizations acquire land for conservation, preservation and recreation. Approximately \$63 million is usually available to eligible applicants each year. The County is eligible to apply for up to 10% of the proposed \$63 million anticipated allocation, which comes out to \$6,300,000. **The application deadline is May 13, 2009.**

The Florida Communities Trust, Forever Florida Program's grant application is cumbersome and detailed. The ranking and scoring criteria contains 36 items that will be used by the Florida Communities Trust for scoring and ranking the site selected and type of project proposed by the Board. The site and project proposed should addresses most of the scoring and ranking criteria and, if possible, be a multi-purpose project, capable of leveraging the highest cumulative points so as to increase the chances of being competitive.

Additionally, the applicant has the opportunity, in the project excellence section of the application, to state if the proposed project exemplifies excellence based on issues not adequately addressed by the evaluation and ranking criteria, such as whether the proposed project exhibits strong community-based support, possesses exemplary characteristics, highlights regional coordination in the protection of natural resources, assists an otherwise disadvantaged community, or voluntarily helps resolve land use conflicts, that was not adequately evaluated by the criteria established elsewhere in the application.

Staff identified a number of potential projects and sites and they are presented in the analysis section of this agenda item for Board consideration. The numerical order of the projects presented is of no signification and not meant to indicate any prioritization by staff.

**Analysis:**

**1) Medart - US Highway 319 and Floyd Gray Road**

This site contains 32.91 acres. It is zoned agriculture. The cost per acre is \$27,203 x 32.91 acres comes to \$895,000. Located on the property is a two story wood frame house with a covered porch, a dilapidated one-story wood frame dwelling, a mobile home with a covered porch, two wood and one metal sheds. This property is said to contain historical significance for the local area. This property was identified as a potential site for the Historical Society's Pioneer Village and for open space recreational use county park (Attachment #3).

**Pros**

1. Property high and dry in Flood Zone A and C.
2. Location good.
3. Contains historical significance to local area.
4. Reasonably priced.
5. Sufficient land for a multi-purpose project that can include the historical society's project and an open space recreational county park use with potential for connectivity to other noted application criteria such the Natural Trail System, Ecological Corridor, Florida Scenic Trail, and Greenways.
6. High scoring and ranking potential under FCT Criteria
7. Innovative Park for Wakulla County combining historic cultural significance and preservation with open space recreational and conservation use.
8. High support from community.
9. Would enable the Historical Society to move forward with their project since the previous proposed site on County property off of Lawhon Mill was determined to be an unusable site for their project.

**Cons**

1. Require zoning change
2. Undergo permitting and cost of fees
3. Public hearing and notice to surrounding property owners

**2) North Wakulla County – 14.9 Acres**

This site is located adjacent to the Walgreens Pharmacy in North Crawfordville off of State Road

369. This property contains two individual parcels, A and B. Parcel A contains a pole barn and dog kennel and Parcel B, a one story brick house, wood shed and pump house. Property owners are willing to sell (Attachment #4).

**Pros**

1. Access to senior citizen's due to proximity to Senior Citizen's Center.
2. County has a dedicated funds in their current Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for northern park expansion that will leverage points in the application
3. Property is high and dry.
4. Connectivity to existing sidewalks is FCT scoring criteria and will contribute positively to downtown development of Crawfordville.
5. Central location with access to employees of private businesses in surrounding area during lunch time.

**Cons**

1. Rezoning required.
2. Permitting required.
3. Price per acre appears high
4. Public hearing and notice to surrounding property owners and businesses.
5. No multi-purpose capability and may not leverage sufficient points for scoring and ranking competitively.
6. Site of no historical significance
7. Little potential for connectivity to other noted application criteria such the Natural Trail System, Ecological Corridor, Florida Scenic Trail, and Greenways.
8. Located in close proximity to an already existing county park and to the Crabapple Park proposed property.

**3) Crab-Apple Park Property**

This property is located off of Old Arran-Wakulla Road. The property is currently designated as a park and contains an existing pond. The intent is to purchase a number of lots contiguous to the park area in order to expand the park and provide for amenities such as senior citizens playground, picnic shelter, ramping boardwalk with steps and overlooks, parking, paths with

accessible surface and

slope, fishing and viewing dock, pedestrian trails, restrooms and educational kiosks (Attachment #5).

**Pros**

1. Undeveloped Crabapple Park is already owned by County.
2. The park's land value can be used as match in the application.
3. Already permitted as a park.
4. Access to senior citizen's due to proximity to Senior Citizen's Center.
5. Central location with access to employees of private businesses in surrounding area during lunch time.
6. Is a feature saving/beautification, conservation effort under FCT criteria.
7. Multi-purpose use capacity which can leverage points under FCT criteria.

**Cons**

1. Requires willing seller(s) determination for feasibility of park as conceptually proposed.
2. Notice of proposed park expansion and use to surrounding property owners.
3. Number of the actual parcels for acquisition unknown.
4. Cost of acquisition of individual parcels unknown.
5. Sinkhole present on property.
6. Located in close proximity to an already existing county park and to the proposed North Wakulla Park property adjacent to Walgreens Pharmacy.
7. Site of no historical significance

The properties identified all have the potential for development under the FCT. However, the FCT criteria dictates that the property that has the highest and best possible use as a multi-purpose

development with capability for preservation of natural, cultural and historic resources with minimal disturbance as possible to natural resources on the project site, that permits connectivity to existing sidewalks or adjacent to existing sidewalks, that can connect to local, regional or statewide land-based recreational trail system, or the preferred routing of the Florida National Scenic Trail or to a Ecological Corridor or Recreational Trail System and other similar efforts, is preferable. Staff has attempted to provide three sites that are capable of meeting some of the criteria, but not all sites can meet all of the criteria for scoring and ranking. The sites presented contain varying features which, depending on the project planned and selected for development by the Board, will determine the competitiveness of the application that will be submitted to the FCT.

Additionally, the Board should be aware that submission of an application to the FCT for project,

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also entails a management plan that calls and for the County to provide dedicated funding to fully develop the proposed project within a five-year period. This is similar to the FCT Big Bend Maritime Museum project that was recently approved by the Board. The funding from the FCT for

this project is strictly for the acquisition of land. The Board will have to provide operational funding for the facilities as well as seek additional grant funding to develop this project. This dictates that the project must receive priority from the County in all sources of funding it seeks and receives and to commit revenues dedicated to the development as stipulated in that management plan to the FCT. An annual stewardship report to the FCT that evaluates the County's progress towards the completion of the project is also a mandatory requirement.

Funding for this program, in both houses of the Legislature is currently set at zero for the upcoming year of 2009-2010. However, there is the possibility that this may change by the end of the session due to efforts of State Senator Al Lawson, the County's own lobbyists and others. Our lobbyist as well as the County's contacts at FCT are optimistic that funding will be made available by the legislature to fund this much needed and worthwhile program.

**Options:**

1. Board Direction.

**Attachments(s):**

1. Blank FCT Application Sample
2. April 7, 2009 Board Agenda Item
3. Boundary Drawings – Medart Property
4. Boundary Drawing – North Wakulla Property
5. Boundary Drawing - Crabapple Park Property