



Florida Neighborhood Revitalization Program Application for Sales and Use Tax

DR-26RP
R. 01/17
TC 02/18
Rule 12A-1.097
Florida Administrative Code
Effective 01/17

If you are claiming a refund from the Florida Department of Revenue of Florida sales and use tax paid on building materials used in the construction of a qualified home, housing or mixed use project, **you must complete this Application and an *Application for Refund-Sales and Use Tax (Form DR-26S)***. These forms, along with any required attachments, must be filed within six (6) months after the date the local building inspector determines the qualified home, housing or mixed-use project is substantially completed.

Select the location and refund type for the project you are claiming:

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Brownfield Area
<input type="checkbox"/> Housing Project
<input type="checkbox"/> Mixed-use Project | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban High Crime Area
<input type="checkbox"/> Housing Project
<input type="checkbox"/> Mixed-use Project | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Infill and Redevelopment Area
<input type="checkbox"/> Housing Project
<input type="checkbox"/> Mixed-use Project |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Front Porch Florida Community
<input type="checkbox"/> Single Family Home <input type="checkbox"/> Housing Project <input type="checkbox"/> Mixed-use Project | | |

Redevelopment Area Name or Number		Owner's Social Security* or FEI Number	
Owner's Name			
Mailing Address			
City		State	ZIP
Assessment Roll Parcel Number			
Building Permit Number		Building Inspector Name	
Phone Number	Fax Number		Date of certificate stating that improvements are substantially complete

* Social security numbers (SSNs) are used by the Florida Department of Revenue as unique identifiers for the administration of Florida's taxes. SSNs obtained for tax administration purposes are confidential under sections 213.053 and 119.071, Florida Statutes, and not subject to disclosure as public records. Collection of your SSN is authorized under state and federal law. Visit our Internet site at floridarevenue.com and select "Privacy Notice" for more information regarding the state and federal law governing the collection, use, or release of SSNs, including authorized exceptions.

Under penalty of perjury, I declare that I have read the forgoing Application and the facts stated in it are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Signature of owner

Date

**Attach a copy of the following documents for the project
that you are claiming a Florida sales and use tax refund:**

DR-26RP
R. 01/17

Qualified Home, Housing Mixed Use Project Designated Location

- Documentation indicating that the physical address of the qualified home or project is located within the area designated in the application (e.g., map of the zone indicating the location of the project).

Ownership, Permits, and Certificates

- A copy of the deed showing ownership of a qualified home, a manufacturing or industrial building converted to a housing or mixed-use project, or newly constructed affordable housing in a brownfield area.
- A copy of the building permit issued for the qualified home, housing or mixed-use project.
- A copy of a certificate issued by the local building inspector stating that the conversion or construction is substantially complete (e.g., Certificate of Completion or Certificate of Occupancy).

Low-Income and Moderate-Income Housing Projects

- Documentation evidencing that the housing or mixed-use project was developed from the conversion of an existing manufacturing or industrial building (e.g., property record from local property appraiser for the year prior to the project).
- Rehabilitation of Existing Manufacturing or Industrial Building - Documentation evidencing that at least 20 percent of the housing units in a housing project, or at least 20 percent of the square footage of a mixed-use project, are set aside for low-income and moderate-income persons (e.g., copy of contract with housing authority).
- New Construction in Brownfield Area - Documentation evidencing that the housing project is affordable housing for extremely-low-income persons, very-low-income persons, low-income persons, and moderate-income persons, or other eligible persons (e.g., copy of contract with housing authority).
- Mixed-Use Projects - Documentation evidencing that artists' studios, art and entertainment services, or other compatible uses are included in the conversion of an existing manufacturing or industrial building to mixed-use units (e.g., lease agreements for areas used for these purposes).

Sworn Statement that Florida Tax was Paid on Building Materials

- A sworn statement issued by the Florida licensed general contractor for the qualified home, housing project, or mixed-use project which lists the building materials used, the cost of those materials, and the amount of Florida tax paid on the materials. If use tax was paid to the Department, the sworn statement must include the amount of use tax paid and the period(s) of the tax return(s) on which the use tax was reported and paid.
- Subcontractors who purchased building materials for use in a qualified home, housing project, or mixed use project must issue the required sworn statement to the general contractor. The general contractor may rely on the sworn statement by each subcontractor when issuing his or her required sworn statement.
- A sworn statement by the owner of the qualified home, housing or mixed-use project when no general contractor is used for the conversion or construction.

***All sworn statements must include the following at the end of the required statement and above the signature:
Under penalties of perjury, I declare that I have read the foregoing statement and the facts stated in it are true
to the best of my knowledge and belief.***

Invoices showing payment of Florida sales tax on building materials

- A copy of sales invoices or other sales documents showing the sales tax payment on building materials.
- If you paid Florida use tax, a copy of the sales and use tax return(s) for the period(s) the use tax was paid to the Department is also required.

Qualified Homes

- A sworn statement by the owner certifying that the owner occupies the qualified home for residential purposes.
- A copy of an appraisal showing that the appraised value of the qualified home is no more than \$160,000 (an assessment from the property appraiser or an appraisal from an independent, licensed Florida appraiser).
- Submit Forms DR-26S and DR-26RP, and all required information and documentation to:

**Florida Department of Revenue
Refunds
PO Box 6490
Tallahassee FL 32314-6490**

Information, forms and tutorials
are available on our website at:
floridarevenue.com

**To speak with a Department of
Revenue representative, call**
Taxpayer Services,
Monday through Friday, excluding holidays, at
850-488-6800.

**For written replies
to tax questions, write to:**

Taxpayer Services - MS 3-2000
Florida Department of Revenue
5050 W Tennessee St
Tallahassee FL 32399-0112

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- Proposed rules, notices of rule
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**FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF
ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**

Collier County Brownfield Areas and Sites

[Home](#) » [Divisions](#) » [Division of Waste Management](#) » [Waste Cleanup Program](#) » Collier County Brownfield Areas and Sites

List of Florida Brownfields Designated Brownfield Areas, Site Rehabilitation Agreements, and Site Rehabilitation Completion Orders for Collier County

The links on this page will redirect you to the OCULUS database where you can use the "PUBLIC OCULUS LOGIN" button to access the database and retrieve the desired document(s).

Collier County

Area ID	Area Name	Site ID	Site Name	SRCO Date
BF110901000	Bayshore Cultural Arts Catalytic Facility for Redevelopment	BF110901001	Hubert's Welding and Repair Site	TBD
BF110401000	Immokalee Airport Area	TBD	TBD	TBD

Return to the [Florida Brownfields Area and Site Documentation](#) page.

Last Modified: February 15, 2021 - 3:39pm



BAYSHORE
GATEWAY
TRIANGLE
COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY

CRA Board

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Commissioner
Fred W. Coyle

Commissioner
Donna Fiala

Commissioner
Frank Halas

Commissioner
Tom Henning

Advisory
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Bill Neal

Bruce Preble

CRA Staff

David L. Jackson
Executive
Director

Jean Jourdan
Project Manager

Sue Trone
Project Manager

Shirley Garcia
Operations
Coordinator

Kim Walker
Brownfields Liaison
Florida Department of Environmental Protection
2600 Blair Stone Road, Ms 4505
Tallahassee, FL 32399

November 19, 2009

Dear Ms. Walker:

I am writing to you on behalf of Collier County Manager Leo Ochs to inform you that on November 10, 2009, the Collier County Board of Commissioners approved Resolution No. 2009-237, designating CRA-owned property as a Brownfield Area. In accordance with Florida Statute 376.80 ("Brownfields Redevelopment Act"), with this letter you are hereby officially notified that this Brownfield Area has been so designated. Enclosed with this letter is a copy of the Resolution.

Per your request, GIS shape files of the Brownfield Area and a draft version of the Brownfield Site Rehabilitation Agreement (BSRA) will be forwarded to you by email shortly.

The most immediate incentive being sought by the CRA through this Brownfield Area designation is a Voluntary Cleanup Tax Credit on a site where petroleum contamination was noted by a Phase II ESA. CRA sponsored remediation activities commenced in August of this year. A Brownfield Site Number from your department is required to complete the BSRA and is hereby requested. This action on your part will allow the CRA to pursue the tax credit application before the end of the current year.

Please let me know what action the CRA needs to take to ensure compliance with all Brownfield regulations to ensure our continued eligibility for relevant incentives. As always, your recommendations to the CRA are deeply appreciated.

Regards,

David Jackson
Executive Director

cc: Mr. Leo Ochs, County Manager, Collier County, Florida

RESOLUTION NO. 09- 273

A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF COLLIER COUNTY, FLORIDA, DESIGNATING A BROWNFIELD AREA WITHIN THE BAYSHORE GATEWAY TRIANGLE COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY (CRA) AREA; FINDING THAT ALL PARCELS ARE OWNED BY THE CRA AND THAT THE CRA INTENDS TO REDEVELOP THE SITE TO FACILITATE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL REMEDIATION, IF NEEDED; DESIGNATING THE CRA LOCAL ADVISORY BOARD AS THE BROWNFIELDS ADVISORY COMMITTEE; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

WHEREAS, Collier County Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA), owns 17.665 acres (more or less) on Bayshore Drive, Naples, Florida (the "Property") the legal description of which is attached hereto as Exhibit A and as depicted on Exhibit B, attached hereto, both of which are incorporated herein by the this reference; and

WHEREAS, Collier County Community Redevelopment Agency, proposes to redevelop the property to facilitate economic development and environmental remediation, if needed; and

WHEREAS, Collier County Community Redevelopment Agency, requests that the Collier County Board of County Commissioners designate the Property a Brownfield Area as authorized under the Florida Brownfields Redevelopment Act, Sections 376.77 – 376.85, Florida Statutes; and

WHEREAS, the CRA Board requests that the Bayshore Gateway Triangle Local Advisory Board serves as the Brownfields Advisory Committee for any and all Brownfields Areas in the Bayshore Gateway Triangle CRA, and

WHEREAS, the Brownfields Redevelopment Act authorizes this Board, by Resolution, to designate contiguous areas consisting of one or more Brownfields sites as Brownfields Areas to facilitate environmental remediation, if needed, and to facilitate economic development; and

WHEREAS, all of the designated Brownfield Area is within a Collier County designated Community Redevelopment Area (Bayshore Gateway Triangle component); and

WHEREAS, the designated Brownfield Area contains portions of land that was used as a gasoline filling station and has documented environmental contamination; and

WHEREAS, valuable economic incentives accrue to those who redevelop designated Brownfield sites;

WHEREAS, Collier County shall notify the Florida Department of Environmental Protection of the designation of this Brownfield Area; and

WHEREAS, the procedures set forth in Subsection 376.80(1), Florida Statutes, have been followed, and proper notice has been provided in accord with Section 376.80 and Subsection 125.66 (4)(b)(2), Florida Statutes.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF COLLIER COUNTY, FLORIDA, that:

Section 1. Findings. The Commission, acting as the governing body of Collier County and the Community Redevelopment Agency, finds the preamble hereof to be true and correct.

Section 2. Designation. For the purposes of the Florida Brownfield Redevelopment Act, Sections 376.77 – 376.85, Florida Statutes, the Property attached hereto as Exhibit A and as depicted on Exhibit B, is hereby designated a Brownfield Area. The area is within a Collier County Community Redevelopment Area is hereby designated for environmental remediation, if needed, and for redevelopment purposes per Sections 376.77 through 376.85, Florida Statutes. This designation shall not render Collier County liable for costs of site rehabilitation or source removal (as defined in Sections 376.77 through 376.84, Florida Statutes) nor for any other costs above and beyond such costs otherwise attributable to Collier County in its role as property owner of all of the subject designated Brownfield Area.

Section 3. Advisory Committee. The Bayshore Gateway Triangle CRA Local Advisory Board shall serve as the Brownfields Advisory Committee for any and all Brownfields Areas designated within the Bayshore Gateway Triangle CRA boundary.

Section 4. Notification. The County Manager shall notify the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, pursuant to Section 376.80, Florida Statutes, of this Brownfield Area designation.

Section 5. Officers and employees of Collier County and Community Redevelopment Agency are hereby authorized to do all things necessary and proper to carry out the intent and purposes of this Resolution.

Section 6. This Resolution shall take effect immediately upon passage and adoption. This Resolution adopted after motion, second and majority vote this 10th day of November 2009.

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
OF COLLIER COUNTY, FLORIDA

By: _____

Donna Fiala, Chair

ATTEST
DWIGHT E. BROCK


Attest as to the
signature of _____
Deputy Clerk

APPROVED AS TO FORM AND
LEGAL SUFFICIENCY:



Steven Williams
Assistant County Attorney

EXHIBIT A

Last Record Title Holder:

Collier County Community Redevelopment Agency

Tax X ID Numbers: 61840960006 and 61840960103 and 61840840003 and 53401680005

Legal Descriptions:

Parcel 1:

The West 425 feet of Lot 109, NAPLES GROVE AND TRUCK CO'S LITTLE FARMS NO.2, according to the plat thereof, recorded in Plat Book 1, page 27A, less the East 200 feet and the West 25 feet thereof, Public Records of Collier County, Florida.

Parcel 2:

The East 200 feet of the West 425 feet of Lot 109, NAPLES GROVE AND TRUCK CO'S LITTLE FARMS NO. 2, according to the plat thereof, recorded in Plat Book 1, page 27A, Public Records of Collier County, Florida. Together with an ingress and egress easement across the North 30 feet of the East 200 feet of the West 225 feet of Lot 109, NAPLES GROVE AND TRUCK CO'S LITTLE FARMS NO.2.

Parcel 3:

All of Lot 108, less and excepting the North 273.44 feet of the West 425 feet and the Kelly Road right-of-way, NAPLES GROVE AND TRUCK CO'S LITTLE FARMS NO. 2, according to the plat thereof recorded in Plat Book 1, page 27A, Public Records of Collier County, Florida;

TOGETHER WITH:

All of Lot 109, less and excepting the West 425 feet and the Kelly Road right-of-way, NAPLES GROVE AND TRUCK CO'S LITTLE FARMS NO. 2, according to the plat thereof, recorded in Plat Book I, page 27A, Public Records of Collier County, Florida.

And

Parcel A, LAKESIDE MOBILE ESTATES, in accordance with and subject to the plat recorded in Plat Book 9, page 99, Public Records of Collier County, Florida.

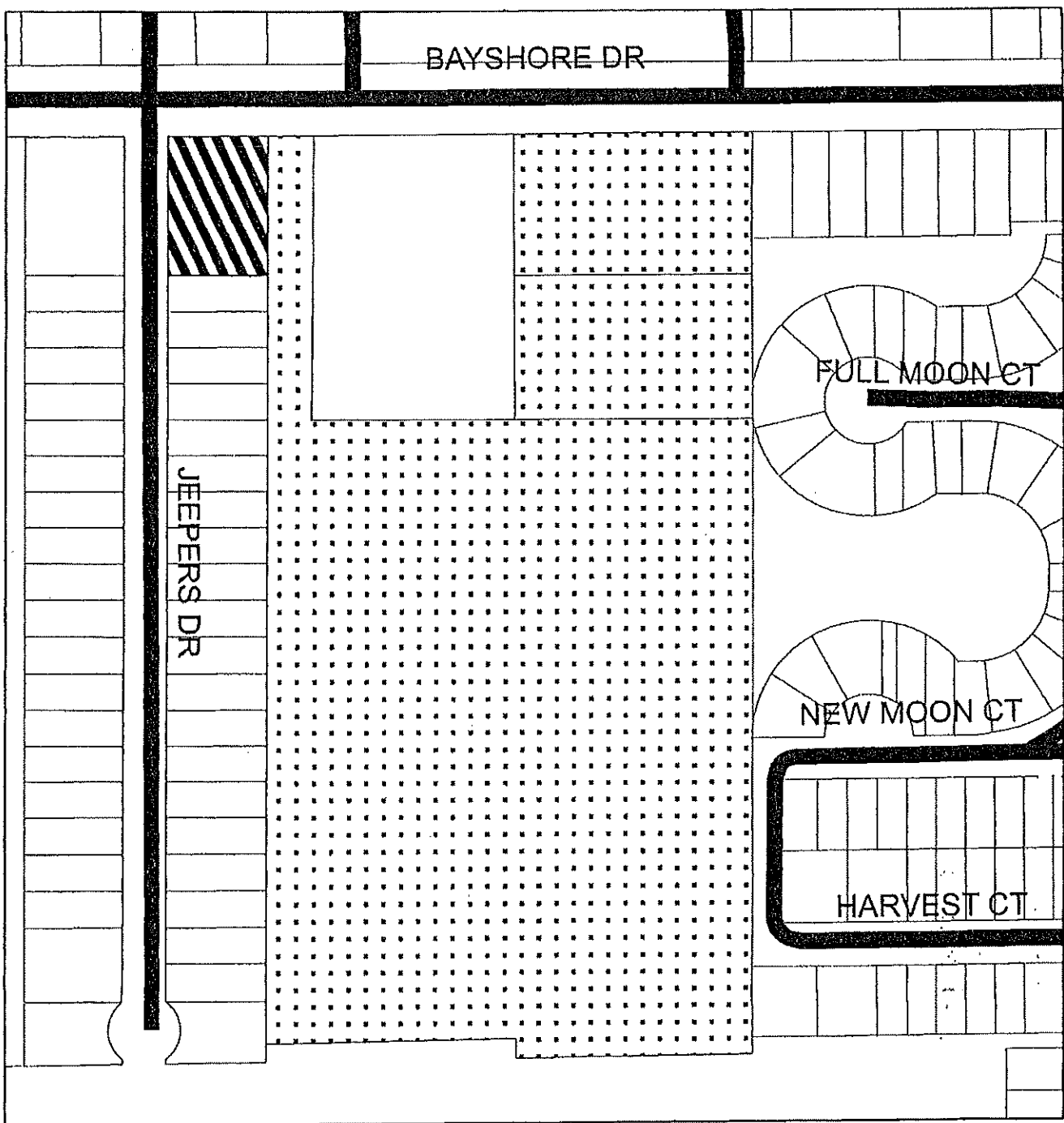


EXHIBIT B Brownfields Area



- Legend**
- Contaminated Site
 - CRA-Owned 17-Acre
 - Roads
 - Parcels



COLLIER COUNTY
FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION AND HOUSING DEPARTMENT

2800 N. Horseshoe Drive • Naples, Florida 34104 • (239) 403-2330 • Fax (239) 403-2331

July 8, 2004

Mr. Roger B. Register, Brownfields Liaison
Department of Environmental Protection
Bureau of Waste Cleanup
M.S. 4505 309 M
2600 Blair Stone Road
Tallahassee, FL 32399-2400

7/16/04
afternoon
data

RECEIVED
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
BUREAU OF WASTE CLEANUP
JUL 15 11:10 AM
TALLAHASSEE, FL

Subject: Immokalee, FL. Brownfields Area Resolution and State Designation

Dear Mr. Register:

On March 23, 2004, the Collier County Board of County Commissioners, in accordance with Sections 376.77 through 376.85, Fla. Stat. (2003), adopted Resolution No. 04-82 (signed copy with description and map attached). This Resolution designated the Immokalee Airport lands as a statutory "brownfield area," as defined in § 376.79 (4). The intent of this designation was to stimulate redevelopment within the designated area through local and state economic incentives.

However, the mere designation of this brownfield area alone does not, and will not, render Collier County liable for any costs of site rehabilitation or source removal, as those terms are defined in §§ 376.79 (14) and (15).

Mr. Tim Billings of our Graphics Department has separately forwarded to you the legal description and an electronic format (shape file) of the Immokalee Airport.

Please confirm your receipt of this notification and the information from Mr. Billings and advise if any additional information or clarification is required.

Respectfully,

H. Denton Baker, Director, Financial Administration and Housing

cc: James V. Mudd, County Manager
Joseph K. Schmitt, Administrator, Community Development and Environmental Services Division
Patrick G. White, Assistant County Attorney
Amy Patterson, Impact Fee Manager
Arthur E. Lyall, South District Brownfields Coordinator
Tim Billings, Graphics Supervisor



RESOLUTION NO. 04-82

A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF COLLIER COUNTY, FLORIDA, MAKING FINDINGS; DESIGNATING A BROWNFIELD AREA THAT IS WITHIN A PORTION OF A COLLIER ENTERPRISE ZONE AND DOES NOT INCLUDE ANY AREA OUTSIDE THE GEOGRAPHIC BOUNDARIES OF THE IMMOKALEE REGIONAL AIRPORT AND ALL OF WHICH IS OWNED BY AND WITHIN COLLIER COUNTY, FOR THE PURPOSE OF ENVIRONMENTAL REMEDIATION, IF NEEDED, AND FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE DESIGNATED BROWNFIELD AREA; PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

WHEREAS, the State of Florida through Chapter 97-277, Laws of Florida, has codified Sections 376.77 through 376.84, Florida Statutes, ("Brownfields Redevelopment Act") and has authorized this Board, by Board Resolution, to designate contiguous areas consisting of one or more Brownfields sites as "Brownfields Areas" to facilitate environmental remediation, if needed, and to facilitate economic development of such Brownfield Area; and

WHEREAS, Collier County desires to notify the Florida Department of Environmental Protection of this designation of this Brownfield Area, to facilitate environmental remediation, if needed, and to facilitate economic development of such area; and

WHEREAS, all of this designated Brownfield Area is within a portion of a Collier County designated Enterprise Zone and no part of this Brownfield Area extends beyond the geographic boundaries of the Immokalee Regional Airport, which airport is owned by Collier County; and

WHEREAS, the designated Brownfield Area is land that was a Federal Military Airport during World War II which included aircraft fueling facilities, buildings and other structures to facilitate use of this Airport as that Military Airfield; and

WHEREAS, the Board of County Commissioners perceives that development and/or redevelopment of the subject designated Brownfield Area is being complicated by actual or perceived environmental contamination within the intent of Florida's Brownfields Redevelopment Act; and

WHEREAS, the procedures set forth in Subsection 376.80(1), Florida Statutes, have been followed, and proper notice has been provided in accord with Section 376.80 and Subsection 125.66 (4)(b)(2), Florida Statutes.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF COLLIER COUNTY, FLORIDA, that:

Section 1. The area depicted on Exhibit A, attached hereto, all of which area is within a Collier County Enterprise Zone and is wholly within the geographic boundaries of the Immokalee Regional Airport, is hereby designated as a Brownfield Area for environmental remediation, if needed, and for redevelopment purposes per Sections

376.77 through 376.84, Florida Statutes. This designation shall not render Collier County liable for costs of site rehabilitation or source removal (as defined in Sections 376.77 through 376.84, Florida Statutes) nor for any other costs above and beyond such costs otherwise attributable to the Collier County in its role as property owner of all of the subject designated Brownfield Area.

Section 2. The County Manager shall notify the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, pursuant to Section 376.80, Florida Statutes, of this Brownfield Area designation.

Section 3. Officers and employees of Collier County are hereby authorized to do all things necessary and proper to carry out the intent and purposes of this Resolution.

Section 4. This Resolution shall take effect immediately upon adoption.

THIS RESOLUTION is adopted after motion, second, and majority vote favoring adoption this _____ day _____, 2004.

ATTEST
DWIGHT E. BROCK, Clerk

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
COLLIER COUNTY, FLORIDA

By: Linda A. Houtz,
Deputy Clerk

By: Donna Fiala,
DONNA FIALA, Chairman

Attest to the Chairman's
signature only.
Approved as to form and legal sufficiency:
Patrick G. White
Patrick G. White, Assistant County Attorney

State of FLORIDA
County of COLLIER

HEREBY CERTIFY THAT this is a true and correct copy of a document on file in Board Minutes and Records of Collier County
WITNESS my hand and official seal this
25 day of March, 2004

DWIGHT E. BROCK, CLERK OF COURTS

By: Linda A. Houtz, D.C.

Item #	<u>17B</u>
Agenda	<u>3/23/04</u>
Date	<u>3/24/04</u>
Date Rec'd	<u>3/24/04</u>
<u>Linda A. Houtz</u> Deputy Clerk	

IMMOKALEE REGIONAL AIRPORT

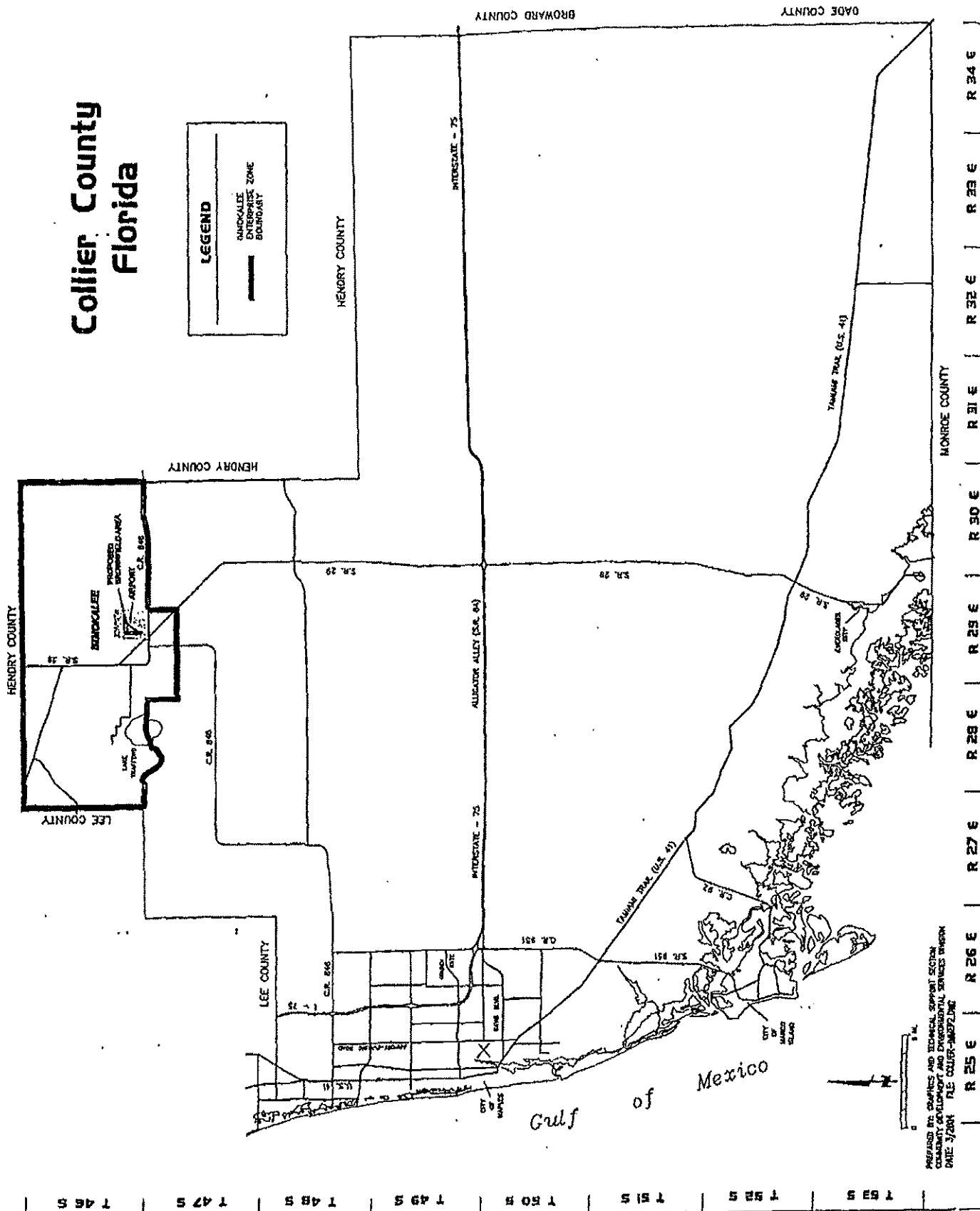
Short Legal Description:

**03 47 29 N1/2 E OF DITCH EXC
DB 31 PG 135 & THAT PORTION OF
VACATED ED SCOTT IMMOKALEE
AIRPORT UNIT 2 RES 88-67**

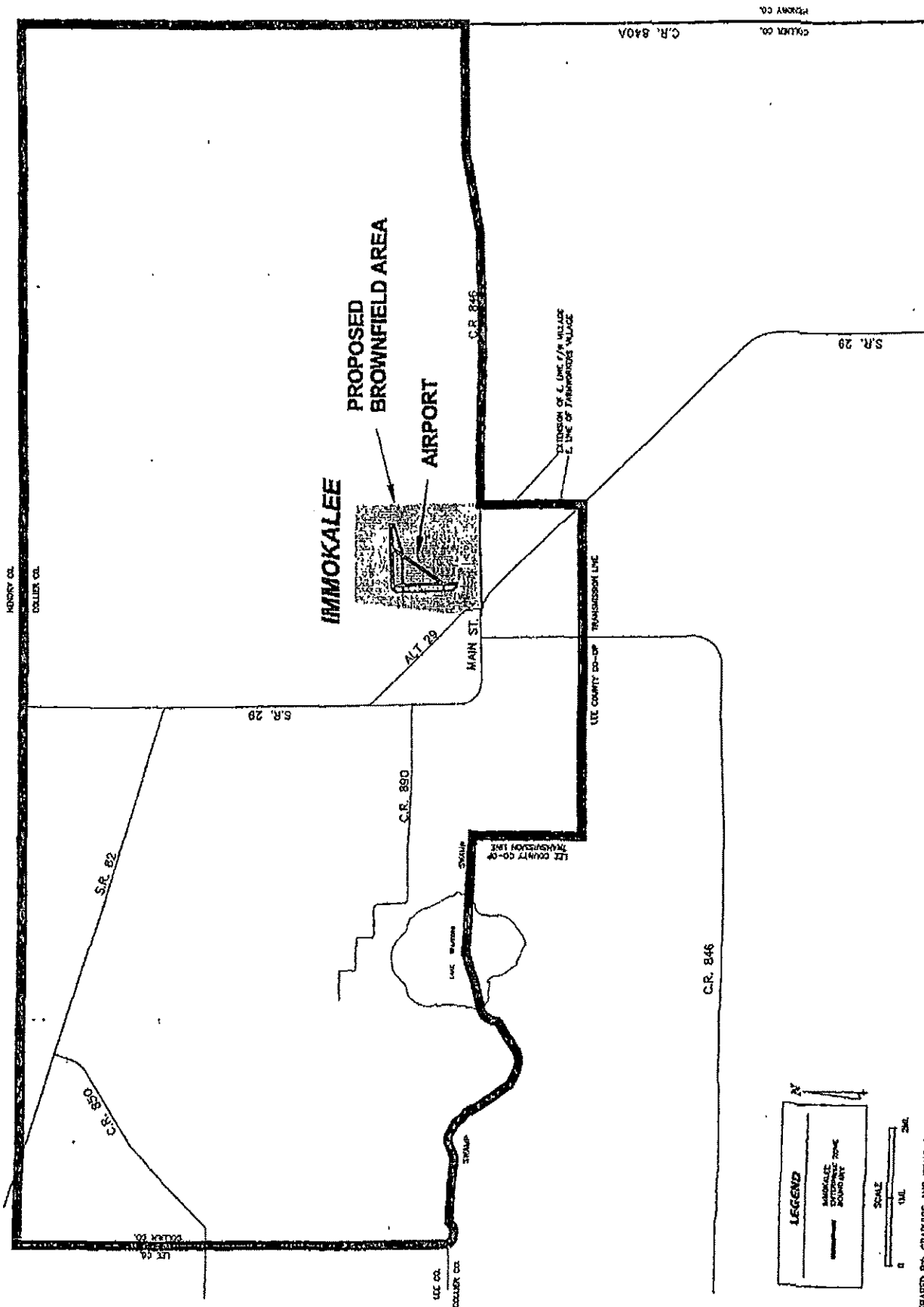
Collier County Florida

LEGEND

AMMOKALEE
ENTREPRENEUR ZONE
BOUNDARY



PREPARED BY: GRAPHICS AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT SECTION
COMPLIANT DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES DIVISION
DATE: 3/2004
FILE: COLLIER-AMKZ.DWG



LEGEND

- IMMOKALEE
- NATURAL/SCIENTIFIC ZONE
- SWAMP

SCALE

0 1/4 1/2 3/4 1

DATE

12/03

FILE

IMA-07-2001076

PREPARED BY: GRAPHICS AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT SECTION
 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES DIVISION
 DATE: 12/03 FILE: IMA-07-2001076



JUSTIA

Laws & Legal Resources.

[View the 2019 Florida Statutes](#) | [View Previous Versions of the Florida Statutes](#)

2013 Florida Statutes

TITLE XIV - TAXATION AND FINANCE

Chapter 212 - TAX ON SALES, USE,

AND OTHER TRANSACTIONS

212.097 - Urban High-Crime Area Job

Tax Credit Program.

Universal Citation: FL Stat § 212.097 (2013)

212.097 Urban High-Crime Area Job Tax Credit Program.—

(1) As used in this section, the term:

(a) “Eligible business” means any sole proprietorship, firm, partnership, or corporation that is located in a qualified county and is predominantly engaged in, or is headquarters for a business predominantly engaged in, activities usually provided for consideration by firms classified within the following standard industrial classifications: SIC 01-SIC 09 (agriculture, forestry, and fishing); SIC 20-SIC 39 (manufacturing); SIC 52-SIC 57 and SIC 59 (retail); SIC 422 (public warehousing and storage); SIC 70 (hotels and other lodging places); SIC 7391 (research and development); SIC 781 (motion picture production and allied services); SIC 7992 (public golf courses); and SIC 7996 (amusement parks). A call center or similar customer service operation that services a multistate market or international market is also an eligible business. In addition, the Department of Economic Opportunity may, as part of its final budget request submitted pursuant to s. 216.023,

recommend additions to or deletions from the list of standard industrial classifications used to determine an eligible business, and the Legislature may implement such recommendations. Excluded from eligible receipts are receipts from retail sales, except such receipts for SIC 52-SIC 57 and SIC 59 (retail) hotels and other lodging places classified in SIC 70, public golf courses in SIC 7992, and amusement parks in SIC 7996. For purposes of this paragraph, the term “predominantly” means that more than 50 percent of the business’s gross receipts from all sources is generated by those activities usually provided for consideration by firms in the specified standard industrial classification. The determination of whether the business is located in a qualified high-crime area and the tier ranking of that area must be based on the date of application for the credit under this section. Commonly owned and controlled entities are to be considered a single business entity.

(b) “Qualified employee” means any employee of an eligible business who performs duties in connection with the operations of the business on a regular, full-time basis for an average of at least 36 hours per week for at least 3 months within the qualified high-crime area in which the eligible business is located. An owner or partner of the eligible business is not a qualified employee. The term also includes an employee leased from an employee leasing company licensed under chapter 468, if such employee has been continuously leased to the employer for an average of at least 36 hours per week for more than 6 months.

(c) “New business” means any eligible business first beginning operation on a site in a qualified high-crime area and clearly separate from any other commercial or business operation of the business entity within a qualified high-crime area. A business entity that operated an eligible business within a qualified high-crime area within the 48 months before the period provided for application by subsection (2) is not considered a new business.

(d) “Existing business” means any eligible business that does not meet the criteria for a new business.

(e) “Qualified high-crime area” means an area selected by the Department of Economic Opportunity in the following manner: every third year, the Department of Economic Opportunity shall rank and tier those areas nominated under subsection (7), according to the following prioritized criteria:

1. Highest arrest rates within the geographic area for violent crime and for such other crimes as drug sale, drug possession, prostitution, vandalism, and civil disturbances;
2. Highest reported crime volume and rate of specific property crimes such as business and residential burglary, motor vehicle theft, and vandalism;

3. Highest percentage of reported index crimes that are violent in nature;
4. Highest overall index crime volume for the area; and
5. Highest overall index crime rate for the geographic area.

Tier-one areas are ranked 1 through 5 and represent the highest crime areas according to this ranking. Tier-two areas are ranked 6 through 10 according to this ranking. Tier-three areas are ranked 11 through 15. Notwithstanding this definition, "qualified high-crime area" also means an area that has been designated as a federal Empowerment Zone pursuant to the Taxpayer Relief Act of 1997. Such a designated area is ranked in tier three until the areas are reevaluated by the Department of Economic Opportunity.

(2) A new eligible business may apply for a tax credit under this subsection once at any time during its first year of operation. A new eligible business in a tier-one qualified high-crime area which has at least 10 qualified employees on the date of application shall receive a \$1,500 tax credit for each such employee. A new eligible business in a tier-two qualified high-crime area which has at least 20 qualified employees on the date of application shall receive a \$1,000 tax credit for each such employee. A new eligible business in a tier-three qualified high-crime area which has at least 30 qualified employees on the date of application shall receive a \$500 tax credit for each such employee.

¹(3)(a) An existing eligible business may apply for a tax credit under this subsection at any time it is entitled to such credit, except as restricted by this subsection. An existing eligible business in a tier-one qualified high-crime area which on the date of application has at least 5 more qualified employees than it had 1 year prior to its date of application shall receive a \$1,500 tax credit for each such additional employee. An existing eligible business in a tier-two qualified high-crime area which on the date of application has at least 10 more qualified employees than it had 1 year prior to its date of application shall receive a \$1,000 credit for each such additional employee. An existing business in a tier-three qualified high-crime area which on the date of application has at least 15 more qualified employees than it had 1 year prior to its date of application shall receive a \$500 tax credit for each such additional employee. An existing eligible business may apply for the credit under this subsection no more than once in any 12-month period. Any existing eligible business that received a credit under subsection (2) may not apply for the credit under this subsection sooner than 12 months after the application date for the credit under subsection (2).

(b) An existing eligible business that filed an application for a tax credit under this subsection on or after January 1, 2009, and was denied because of the limitation set forth in subsection (5) at the time of such application, may refile the application on or before

December 31, 2012, if the number of qualified employees employed on the day the denied application is refiled is no lower than the number of qualified employees on the day the denied application was initially filed. Any credit resulting from the refiled application is subject to the aggregate limitation set forth in subsection (10) for the calendar year 2012. For purposes of applying the tax credit eligibility determination required by this section to the refiled application, the terms “date of application” and “application date” mean the date the denied application was initially filed.

(4) For any new eligible business receiving a credit pursuant to subsection (2), an additional \$500 credit shall be provided for any qualified employee who is a welfare transition program participant. For any existing eligible business receiving a credit pursuant to subsection (3), an additional \$500 credit shall be provided for any qualified employee who is a welfare transition program participant. Such employee must be employed on the application date and have been employed less than 1 year. This credit shall be in addition to other credits pursuant to this section regardless of the tier-level of the high-crime area. Appropriate documentation concerning the eligibility of an employee for this credit must be submitted as determined by the Department of Revenue.

¹(5) To be eligible for a tax credit under subsection (3), the number of qualified employees employed 1 year before the application date must be no lower than the number of qualified employees on January 1, 2009, or on the application date on which a credit under this section was based for any previous application, including an application under subsection (2).

(6) Any county or municipality, or a county and one or more municipalities together, may apply to the Department of Economic Opportunity for the designation of an area as a high-crime area after the adoption by the governing body or bodies of a resolution that:

(a) Finds that a high-crime area exists in such county or municipality, or in both the county and one or more municipalities, which chronically exhibits extreme and unacceptable levels of poverty, unemployment, physical deterioration, and economic disinvestment;

(b) Determines that the rehabilitation, conservation, or redevelopment, or a combination thereof, of such a high-crime area is necessary in the interest of the health, safety, and welfare of the residents of such county or municipality, or such county and one or more municipalities; and

(c) Determines that the revitalization of such a high-crime area can occur if the public sector or private sector can be induced to invest its own resources in productive enterprises that build or rebuild the economic viability of the area.

(7) The governing body of the entity nominating the area shall provide to the Department of Economic Opportunity the following:

(a) The overall index crime rate for the geographic area;

(b) The overall index crime volume for the area;

(c) The percentage of reported index crimes that are violent in nature;

(d) The reported crime volume and rate of specific property crimes such as business and residential burglary, motor vehicle theft, and vandalism; and

(e) The arrest rates within the geographic area for violent crime and for such other crimes as drug sale, drug possession, prostitution, disorderly conduct, vandalism, and other public-order offenses.

(8) A municipality, or a county and one or more municipalities together, may not nominate more than one high-crime area. However, any county as defined by s. 125.011(1) may nominate no more than three high-crime areas.

(9) An area nominated by a county or municipality, or a county and one or more municipalities together, for designation as a high-crime area shall be eligible only if it meets the following criteria:

(a) The selected area does not exceed 20 square miles and either has a continuous boundary or consists of not more than three noncontiguous parcels;

(b) The selected area does not exceed the following mileage limitation:

1. For communities having a total population of 150,000 persons or more, the selected area does not exceed 20 square miles.

2. For communities having a total population of 50,000 persons or more, but fewer than 150,000 persons, the selected area does not exceed 10 square miles.

3. For communities having a total population of 20,000 persons or more, but fewer than 50,000 persons, the selected area does not exceed 5 square miles.

4. For communities having a total population of fewer than 20,000 persons, the selected area does not exceed 3 square miles.

(10)(a) In order to claim this credit, an eligible business must file under oath with the Department of Economic Opportunity a statement that includes the name and address of the eligible business and any other information that is required to process the application.

(b) Applications shall be reviewed and certified pursuant to s. 288.061.

(c) The maximum credit amount that may be approved during any calendar year is \$5 million, of which \$1 million shall be exclusively reserved for tier-one areas. The Department of Revenue, in conjunction with the Department of Economic Opportunity, shall notify the governing bodies in areas designated as urban high-crime areas when the \$5 million maximum amount has been reached. Applications must be considered for approval in the order in which they are received without regard to whether the credit is for a new or existing business. This limitation applies to the value of the credit as contained in approved applications. Approved credits may be taken in the time and manner allowed pursuant to this section.

(11) If the application is insufficient to support the credit authorized in this section, the Department of Economic Opportunity shall deny the credit and notify the business of that fact. The business may reapply for this credit within 3 months after such notification.

(12) If the credit under this section is greater than can be taken on a single tax return, excess amounts may be taken as credits on any tax return submitted within 12 months after the approval of the application by the department.

(13) It is the responsibility of each business to affirmatively demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Department of Revenue that it meets the requirements of this section.

(14) Any person who fraudulently claims this credit is liable for repayment of the credit plus a mandatory penalty of 100 percent of the credit and is guilty of a misdemeanor of the second degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082 or s. 775.083.

(15) A corporation may take the credit under this section against its corporate income tax liability, as provided in s. 220.1895. However, a corporation that applies its job tax credit against the tax imposed by chapter 220 may not receive the credit provided for in this section. A credit may be taken against only one tax.

History.—s. 1, ch. 97-50; s. 10, ch. 98-342; s. 86, ch. 99-251; s. 2, ch. 99-342; s. 56, ch. 2000-165; s. 15, ch. 2000-210; s. 2, ch. 2001-106; s. 4, ch. 2009-51; s. 77, ch. 2011-142; s. 9, ch. 2012-32; s. 14, ch. 2013-18.

¹Note.—Section 25, ch. 2012-32, provides that:

“(1) The executive director of the Department of Revenue is authorized, and all conditions are deemed met, to adopt emergency rules under ss. 120.536(1) and 120.54(4), Florida Statutes, for the purpose of implementing this act.

“(2) Notwithstanding any provision of law, such emergency rules shall remain in effect for 6 months after the date adopted and may be renewed during the pendency of procedures to adopt permanent rules addressing the subject of the emergency rules.”

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The Florida Senate

Interim Project Report 2008-110

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Committee on Community Affairs

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AFFAIRS – REVIEW OF THE FRONT PORCH FLORIDA INITIATIVE

SUMMARY

The Front Porch Florida Initiative encourages revitalization efforts in some of the state's most distressed communities through the award of competitive grants to fund projects proposed by the community. Twenty communities have been designated as Front Porch Florida communities. In general, Front Porch funding has been used for economic development, beautification, revitalization, technical assistance, community training, and youth development. Since the initiative began in 1999, the Legislature has appropriated over \$28 million in funding. Front Porch was created in the 1999 budget and has received funding each year, but the initiative has not been codified in Florida Statutes.

The successes of Front Porch have been the community involvement necessary to achieve the designation and to complete projects, as well as the flexibility the communities have to address issues that are the most important to the residents. One continuing challenge is building sufficient capacity in the designated communities to continue the revitalization efforts initiated with Front Porch funding.

Staff recommends codifying the initiative in Florida Statutes and providing rulemaking authority for the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) to administer the program. Additionally, the committee may wish to provide statutory criteria governing the award of any future Front Porch Florida grants, as well as accountability measures for reimbursements.

BACKGROUND

Front Porch Florida, an initiative established by Governor Bush and modeled after Front Porch Alliance of Indianapolis, began in 1999 with the designation of six communities through a competitive application process. Rather than creating Front Porch Florida in

statute, the initiative began as part of the budget process. The mission of Front Porch is to:

- Encourage and support Florida's urban and rural citizens in their efforts to preserve core neighborhood values and strengthen community assets.
- Foster an atmosphere of cooperation and understanding in neighborhoods that leads to committed local activism.
- Promote and celebrate neighborhoods that have successfully revitalized themselves using grassroots efforts.¹

The Office of Urban Opportunity (OUO) was initially created within the Executive Office of the Governor to administer Front Porch. In 2004, the OUO was moved to the Division of Housing and Community Development in the Department of Community Affairs. Since 1999, the following 20 Front Porch communities were designated as the result of four application cycles: West Bartow (Bartow); Rogers, Rousch Field, Singletary, & Washington (Bradenton); Central City (Daytona Beach); Dorsey-Riverbend (Ft. Lauderdale); Duval Area (Gainesville); Gifford (Vero Beach); South Immokalee (Immokalee); Sherwood Forest (Jacksonville); Riverside (Miami); West Ocala (Ocala); Opa-Locka (Opa-Locka); Holden Heights (Orlando); Greater Pensacola (Pensacola); Goldsboro (Sanford); Newtown (Sarasota); Greater South Central (St. Petersburg); Sylvania Heights (Ft. Walton Beach); Greater Frenchtown (Tallahassee); East Tampa (Tampa); and Northwood, Pleasant City, NW (W. Palm Beach). These communities typically have median family incomes that are lower than the county, state, and national medians and also have, on average, a poverty rate that is almost three times the national rate.²

¹ See The Governor's Front Porch Florida Initiative: Keeping the Promise 1999-2006.

² See footnote 1 at pg. 15.

Front Porch communities were selected by the Governor based on the following criteria:

- Strength of the community's neighborhood action plan and the level of community participation in preparing the plan;
- Evidence of the community's commitment to the plan as demonstrated through past achievements in targeted areas;
- Demonstration of established and effective partnerships between residents, local government, and the private sector;
- Level of commitment and support from the local government and community;
- Degree to which the nominating entity represents the diversity of the community's residents and business owners; and
- Geographic boundaries of the community.³

Following designation as a Front Porch Florida community, a revitalization council oversees implementation of the neighborhood action plan. Revitalization council members are volunteers selected by the community. The role of a council member varies widely, but the member must support their community's goals, be a good steward of taxpayer dollars, participate in sweat equity projects, and keep stakeholders apprised of opportunities. The council chair has even greater responsibilities, including, ensuring quality products and services are delivered in an equitable manner to the community, implementing accountability measures, and securing an independent no-cost or low-cost office.⁴

Each revitalization council develops a neighborhood (or community) action plan that identifies those issues the community wishes to work on collectively. At a minimum, the neighborhood action plan must contain: vital statistics about the community, major issues, issue priorities, implementation steps and timelines, short-term and long-term goals, measurable outcomes, and a feasibility analysis.⁵ DCA provided technical assistance to the communities as they developed their plans.

A community liaison is hired by the OUO to staff each revitalization council at the local level. The role of the community liaison is intended to provide resource development and technical assistance to the revitalization council. The responsibilities of a community liaison may include grant writing, performing research for grants, preparing reports, scheduling community events, distributing information to council members, monitoring grants from the OUO, and assisting with the implementation of projects and activities.⁶

From fiscal year 1999-2000 through fiscal year 2007-2008, Front Porch Florida received \$32,026,526 in funding. The table below shows the annual appropriation.⁷

FY 99-00	\$5,343,120
FY 00-01	\$4,693,721
FY 01-02	\$4,222,356
FY 02-03	\$2,780,362
FY 03-04	\$3,180,332
FY 04-05	\$3,180,332
FY 05-06	\$3,181,295
FY 06-07	\$3,447,573
FY 07-08	\$1,997,435

Front Porch funding has been used by the designated communities to address the following issues:

- Revitalization (including revitalization projects, operational, media outreach and community startup) – \$8,776,110.
- Competitive Grants (for special programs and projects) – \$900,000.
- Keep FL Beautiful/Beautification (for aesthetically enhancing the community) – \$700,000.
- Digital Divide and Technology Services (for linking computer technology with literacy and training) – \$680,000.

³ See footnote 1 at pg. 8.

⁴ See *The Revitalization Council – Duties and Responsibilities*, The Front Porch Florida Initiative, Division of Housing and Community Development, Florida Department of Community Affairs at <http://www.floridacommunitydevelopment.org/fpf/RevitalizationCouncil.cfm>.

⁵ See *The Front Porch Florida Initiative: Community Action Plan*, Division of Housing and Community Development, Florida Department of Community Affairs

at <http://www.floridacommunitydevelopment.org/fpf/ActionPlan.cfm>.

⁶ See *Community Liaison – Duties and Responsibilities*, The Front Porch Florida Initiative, Division of Housing and Community Development, Florida Department of Community Affairs at <http://www.floridacommunitydevelopment.org/fpf/Liaison.cfm>.

⁷ The appropriations/approved budget amounts in the table below are from the state appropriation ledger.

- Community Liaisons (serving as consultants to the communities and councils) – \$2,565,000.
- Youth Programs (for programs focused on education, mentoring, and self sufficiency for youth) – \$1,622,000.
- Services/Technical Assistance/Community Training (providing expertise and specialized community training to build organizational capacity, self sufficiency, and sustainability) – \$ 9,075,610.
- Economic Development (supporting small businesses) – \$ 1,362,500.⁸

Also, as part of the funding for Front Porch, a Micro Loan Program was created for small businesses operating in a Front Porch community and for residents of the community with a viable business plan. The average loan was just above \$10,000 and 84 micro loans were awarded between 2002-2005. As the loans were repaid, the funds were recycled to other qualified applicants. Funding for the Micro Loan Program was discontinued in fiscal year 2005-2006.⁹

Other Benefits

In addition to funding, Front Porch Florida communities are eligible for other benefits. Under s. 163.2517, F.S., a Front Porch community may be designated as an urban infill and redevelopment area if the community's plan used for the Front Porch designation adequately describes the infill and redevelopment objectives of the local government within the proposed area and meets certain other criteria. For the Urban Infill and Redevelopment Assistance Grant Program administered under s. 163.2523, F.S., projects within a Front Porch community are given an elevated priority in the scoring of competing grant applications. Section 163.458, F.S., authorizes Front Porch communities to apply for core administrative and operating grants of up to \$50,000 per year for a period of 5 years which may be utilized to further the goals and objectives of the Front Porch Florida Initiative.

The Legislature has created tax incentives to encourage investment in Front Porch communities. Section 212.08, F.S., provides a sales tax exemption for construction materials for qualifying homes and for building materials used in certain redevelopment

projects that are located in a Front Porch community. Projects meeting certain criteria and located within a Front Porch community are eligible for a community contribution tax credit.¹⁰ There is also a premium tax credit available to insurance companies who invest certified capital in qualifying companies that invest in new businesses or expanding businesses in Front Porch communities.¹¹

Front Porch communities receive priority for grants or awards in other statutory programs. For example, up to 20 percent of the Reducing Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities: Closing the Gap grants are earmarked to fund projects that improve racial and ethnic health within specific Front Porch communities.¹² Also, the matching requirement for these grants is waived for Front Porch communities.¹³ Another component of the Front Porch Initiative is the creation of an urban homesteading program. Section 420.632, F.S., authorizes a local government or its designee to make foreclosed single-family homes available to qualified buyers for purchase.

METHODOLOGY

Staff met with DCA staff and several Front Porch communities to discuss the success of the initiative and any needed changes.

FINDINGS

Funding Projects in Front Porch Communities

Because the Front Porch Initiative was created in the budget and has no statutory guidance, the OUO has had to develop a process for awarding grants to the designated communities. Funding is awarded to Front Porch communities on a competitive basis. DCA staff review the application for funding and score it based on certain criteria.¹⁴ The OUO has indicated that it tries to focus the grants on projects that Front Porch communities have identified as one of their top three priorities.¹⁵

Currently, applicants may not submit more than two applications per cycle and each application for funding

¹⁰ Section 220.183, Fla. Stat.

¹¹ Section 288.99, Fla. Stat.

¹² Section 381.7354(3), Fla. Stat.

¹³ Section 381.7356(2)(c), Fla. Stat.

¹⁴ The criteria for reviewing applications for funding has not been adopted by rule because DCA has not been given rulemaking authority.

¹⁵ Discussed during meeting with DCA staff on August 8, 2007.

⁸ See footnote 1 at pg. 45. These amounts represent the total investment by Front Porch Florida in the identified program areas between fiscal year 1999-2000 and fiscal year 2005-2006.

⁹ See footnote 1 at pg. 14.

is limited to \$50,000.¹⁶ Also, at least a 25 percent match is required for each application and 10 percent or more of the match must be financial rather than in-kind services. The revitalization council is responsible for ensuring the completion of a project. Approved projects must be operable within 30 days after being awarded funding.¹⁷

As part of the application process, the applicant must demonstrate approval by the full revitalization council, a link with the neighborhood action plan, and performance measures to gauge the success of the program, as well as identify major or key partners in the project.¹⁸ The application must also be accompanied by letters of support verifying the amount of any financial commitment or in-kind services that will be counted towards the match requirement. A detailed budget for the proposed project must be included with the application. The OUO has identified the following allowable expenses: administrative costs not to exceed 10 percent of the funding awarded, travel, reasonable consulting fees, project supplies, and other costs as approved by the OUO. The OUO may modify a budget based on eligible expenses.¹⁹

The revitalization council, in some cases with community input, selects the projects for which they would like to request funding. The OUO has established criteria to evaluate the applications for funding as follows:

- Whether the project makes progress towards specified objectives such as creates/offers leadership programs or training, trains employees or upgrades skills, renews or redevelops a specified geographic area, partners with one or more existing programs, stimulates small business development, reduces crime or increases safety, or improves education;
- Whether the project satisfies a component of the neighborhood action plan or ties in well with the plan;

- Past experience of major partners and the responsibilities assigned to those partners;
- Letters of support;
- Whether the project will be completed timely; and the
- Amount of the match.²⁰

To receive funding after a grant has been awarded, the applicant must submit a request for payment form to OUO along with documents that demonstrate satisfactory completion of each deliverable by the due date. Any delay in meeting a due date must be approved in writing by the OUO in advance of submitting a request for payment.²¹ After funds have been awarded, DCA reviews the reimbursement request to ensure the work performed is consistent with the project as described in the grant application.

DCA has established the Community Evaluation, Monitoring and Performance System (CEMPS) to monitor the effectiveness of the contracts that OUO has with the Front Porch communities and receive input on ways to enhance those communities.²² Specific criteria are used to separately evaluate the effectiveness of the community liaison and the revitalization council. Each criterion is assigned a points value and a minimum number of points must be achieved for a community to be considered for contract renewal or eligible for increased funding.²³ The revitalization councils that score less than the minimum threshold will be limited to a reduced funding amount applicable to all councils with scores below the minimum. Those councils that score above the minimum may request the maximum amount allowed by the OUO. These evaluations occur every June and December and are performed by the OUO director and contract manager.

¹⁶ See Front Porch Florida Initiative, Fiscal Year 2006-2007, Quarter 2 Mini Competitive Grant Application Cycle, The Florida Department of Community Affairs' Office of Urban Opportunity. The funding available for the 2006-2007 Quarter 2 Mini Grant Application Cycle was \$500,000.

¹⁷ See footnote 16 at pg. 4.

¹⁸ See footnote 16 at pg. 6.

¹⁹ See footnote 16 at pg. 9.

²⁰ See footnote 16 at pg. 11. There are also bonus points for professionalism (i.e., grammar, spelling, and presentation). Tie-breakers, if needed, are based on the level of funding requested as a percentage of the project cost (lower percentages have a greater chance of being funded) and the level of in-kind services.

²¹ See footnote 16 at pg. 9.

²² See Community, Evaluation, Monitoring and Performance System (Known as CEMPS) at <http://www.floridacommunitydevelopment.org/fpf/Documents/FormsPoliciesProcedures/CEMPSPresentation.pdf>, Office of Urban Opportunity.

²³ Liaisons can receive a maximum of 130 points and must score at least 91 points or 70 percent to avoid corrective action, contract non-renewal, or contract termination. Similarly, revitalization councils must achieve 144 points out of a possible 205 points or 70 percent.

Types of Projects Funded

Some of the projects that have been funded by Front Porch include yard maintenance for the elderly and persons with disabilities, regular streetscape maintenance and landscaping, external repair for homes and businesses, new signage for businesses, and new mailboxes. Funds have also been used to provide computer literacy training, including the establishment of computer labs. Other projects involved after school and summer enrichment programs, tutorial services, providing a training and referral site for vocational training, basic adult education and GED classes, and parenting classes. In some communities, workshops have been offered on grant writing, estate planning, and workplace readiness. Also, a number of communities have received grants for literacy activities and programs from the Department of Education. Adults and youth have received training in work and construction readiness. Front Porch communities have also used funding to address social and health care issues, including senior care, dental care for indigent patients, substance abuse counseling, transportation to receive critical services, health screenings, and combating crime. Economic development projects have included small business loans, infrastructure improvements, and acquiring vacant lots for infill.

Youth Development Services

In fiscal year 2004-2005, the Legislature directed the OUO to use up to \$400,000 in Front Porch funding for "community-based outreach resource programs for inner-city high schools to promote higher graduation rates, higher attendance rates, drop-out prevention, and a decrease in juvenile crimes. Such programs should be instrumental in developing a future quality workforce..." The OUO contracted with two organizations to provide youth development services that include a summer employment program. In addition, the OUO has developed the Youth Empowerment and Leadership Development Academy (YELDA) that assists selected students in each of the Front Porch communities with professional development and summer employment. The students in YELDA participate in leadership and professional development workshops that include communications strategies, resume writing, and proper interviewing techniques.

Front Porch Successes

The Front Porch Initiative has made progress towards achieving the Governor's stated goals of economic self sufficiency and social empowerment. DCA reports that in fiscal year 2004-2005, 60 percent of the projects in the Front Porch communities' action plans had been

implemented or completed.²⁴ Based on our discussions with some of the communities, the strengths of the initiative include the community building exercise that must occur in order to file an application to be designated as a Front Porch community. Also, the initiative has been flexible enough to allow the designated communities to select the projects most important to them. The community involvement that is necessary to successfully complete a project has probably helped to foster a greater commitment by the residents to their community. Also, the provision of in-kind services that are often part of a contract awarded under Front Porch helps these communities build relationships that will be valuable in further efforts to revitalize the community.

One important aspect of the Front Porch Initiative in its early years, according to participants, was assistance offered by The Advance Team or "A-Team" that included most state agencies. For example, the Department of Corrections provided labor for beautification projects and, in at least one instance, for the construction of a new facility for youth programs. The Department of Environmental Protection provided technical assistance and funding, and established a contact list for its programs that would be beneficial to Front Porch communities. The Florida Energy Office contracted with a provider to install 150 solar water heaters in Front Porch communities. The Department of Health has awarded Closing the Gap grants to several communities for health screenings and education. Although the "A-Team" does not exist in its original form, those agencies that played key roles early in the Front Porch initiative have continued to serve as a resource for the communities.²⁵

Recent Changes in Front Porch

In July, the OUO announced the following changes:

- Elimination of the community liaison positions effective December 31, 2007.
- Limitation on funding for the next funding cycle to projects related to economic development, housing, health or education.
- Restrictions on funding for travel.²⁶

The position of community liaison has been integral to the work of some of the revitalization councils and it is

²⁴ See footnote 1 at pg. 10.

²⁵ See footnote 1 at pgs. 42-43.

²⁶ See Memorandum from the Director of the OUO to Front Porch Councils and Community Liaisons, July 26, 2007.

not clear who will provide the technical assistance and outreach work performed by the former community liaisons. The working relationship between a revitalization council and the community liaison has worked better for some communities than others. In those communities with a good working relationship, the community liaison has been key in the council's efforts to let residents of the community know about their eligibility for certain services or programs. They have also assisted with researching grant opportunities and writing grant applications.

Opportunities to Improve

Some Front Porch communities continue to struggle with identifying state and federal funding programs that would impact their community and also lack the capacity or staff to successfully apply for such programs. Also, there has been an issue regarding the accountability of the community liaisons. There have been limited problems with the documentation of expenditures that is necessary to receive reimbursement.

Suggestions for improvements in Front Porch include additional funding, greater technical assistance in the area of capacity building, increased communication and networking between communities, and providing structure by rule or statute to ensure a continuing commitment on the state's part to the initiative. Some of the specific suggestions for revising the Front Porch Initiative offered by stakeholders included:

- Providing additional funding for those communities that demonstrate their capacity to leverage the funds.
- Providing additional technical assistance that builds capacity in Front Porch Communities to successfully draw other state, federal, and private sector economic development to the community.
- Narrowing the focus of the initiative while still providing for local solutions.
- Continuing flexibility to address whatever needs are not being met in the community, such as health screenings, landscaping, job training, etc.
- Redefining the role of the revitalization councils, if funds are limited to economic development, to that of identifying the areas that traditional economic development entities are missing and fill in that gap.

RECOMMENDATIONS

If the committee wishes to encourage continued funding of the Front Porch Florida Initiative, staff recommends codifying the initiative in Florida Statutes and giving DCA rulemaking authority to administer the program. The committee may also wish to provide statutory criteria that will govern the award of any future grants through Front Porch while still maintaining the autonomy that Front Porch communities currently have to propose various types of projects for funding. Additionally, the committee may want to provide accountability requirements that govern the reimbursement procedures for grant recipients.