

PROPOSAL

Recommended Uses for the College's Big Pine Key Leased Property

Short-Term Site Protection Measures and a Long-Term Workforce Training Center Concept, Consistent with the State Lease, Monroe County Regulations, and Federal Endangered Species Requirements

Location	450 Key Deer Blvd., Big Pine Key, Monroe County, Florida (Section 26, Township 66S, Range 29E)
Property Interest	Leased from the State of Florida — not College-owned. Lease Number 4863, approximately 9.77 +/- acres
Lessor	Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund of the State of Florida, administered by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Division of State Lands
Lease Term	50 years — November 23, 2021 through November 22, 2071
Prepared For	Board Discussion
Date	September 22, 2026

1. Purpose and Overview

This proposal outlines a phased approach for the College's approximately 9.77-acre leased property on Big Pine Key (commonly referred to as the BPK Property). It addresses immediate site conditions, access for the endangered Key deer, and control of pedestrian and vehicle entry alongside a long-term vision for developing the parcel into a workforce training center supporting career and technical education (CTE) addressing regional workforce demands. Demolition of the sixteen existing dilapidated structures on the site requires a capital funding source that has not yet been identified; it is therefore treated as a long-term action tied to future funding rather than a short-term task the College can begin without a designated budget. The recommendations are organized into short-term (0–12 months) and long-term (1–5+ years, funding-contingent) strategies so the College can act quickly regarding site protection while planning a capital project for future use. A map of the property (Exhibit 1) is included in this proposal.

The property is not owned by the College. It is held under a 50-year lease (Lease Number 4863) from the Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund of the State of Florida, administered by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) Division of State Lands, running from November 23, 2021, through November 22, 2071. The lease imposes a defined approval process centered on a Lessor-approved Land Use Plan that governs all development, alteration, and construction on the site. Every recommendation in this proposal is framed to work within that process, in addition to applicable Monroe County land development regulations, and federal Endangered Species Act requirements.

Big Pine Key is habitat for the Key deer (*Odocoileus virginianus clavium*), a federally listed endangered species under U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) jurisdiction. Any site work, demolition, or construction on the property will be coordinated with USFWS, including, but not limited to, completion of a Section 7 biological assessment for the project before construction-level planning proceeds (see Section 2.3).

The College received suggested uses for the property from Save Our Key Deer and 106 respondents to the *Community Feedback Form – Big Pine Key Property* that was available on the College's website.

2. Property and Regulatory Context

Because the parcel is leased state land within a federally protected species area, three layers of approval govern changes to the site: the state lease itself, applicable Monroe County land development regulations, and federal Endangered Species Act review. Each is summarized below and should be treated as a gating requirement, not merely a formality, before design or construction commitments are made.

2.1 State Lease Requirements Governing Development

Lease Number 4863 (Paragraph 8, Land Use Plan) requires the College, as Lessee, to prepare and submit a Land Use Plan for the leased premises to the Lessor for approval through the Division of State Lands, consistent with Section 253.034, Florida Statutes. Key constraints from the lease that directly affect this proposal:

- The leased premises may not be developed or physically altered in any way beyond what is necessary for security and maintenance without the Lessor's prior written approval, until the Land Use Plan is approved.
- The College may not proceed with development until the Land Use Plan required under the lease has been submitted and approved.
- All buildings, structures, and improvements must be designed by professional designers and require the Lessor's prior written approval as to purpose, location, and design; and no major land alteration may occur without prior written Lessor approval.
- The Land Use Plan must be reviewed by the Florida Division of Historical Resources to ensure archaeological and historic sites are protected, consistent with Chapter 267, Florida Statutes.
- The Land Use Plan requires a short-term goals update at year five and a full update at least every ten years from the lease's execution date.

Practically, this means the College's Land Use Plan submission must include the planned demolition of existing structures, and the long-term training center concept. This is a critical-path document for this entire proposal and should be prioritized and coordinated directly with the Division of State Lands.

2.2 Monroe County Land Development Regulations

In addition to the state lease, any site work is subject to applicable Monroe County's Land Development Code and the Big Pine Key/No Name Key Livable CommuniKeys Plan. The property is zoned Suburban Commercial.

Compliance plans include:

- Collaborate with Monroe County Planning & Environmental Resources before finalizing any site plan.
- Coordinate demolition and land clearing with the County concurrently with the state Land Use Plan process, since both agencies will expect a consistent site plan.
- The College is self-permitting and does not require permits from the County; however, site plans will be shared.

2.3 Endangered Species Act Section 7 Biological Assessment

The College still needs to conduct a Section 7 biological assessment for this project. Because federal or federally permitted actions affecting Key deer habitat trigger Endangered Species Act Section 7 consultation with USFWS, this assessment should be initiated early and treated as a prerequisite for the state Land Use Plan approval process, not a step that follows. The assessment should evaluate the demolition of existing structures, and the long-term

workforce training center footprint together, so USFWS is reviewing one coherent plan rather than piecemeal actions.

3. Short-Term Strategy: Site Protection and Access Control

The near-term goal is to protect existing site conditions, preserve Key deer access to water sources on the property, and establish basic control over who and what enters the site while long-term plans are developed. Demolition of the sixteen dilapidated structures on the site is addressed separately in Section 4.1 as a long-term action pending identification of a capital funding source and is not included in the short-term work below. In the interim, the College should take reasonable steps (e.g., fencing off, signage, or otherwise securing unsafe structures) to limit safety and liability exposure at those structures until funding for demolition is identified.

3.1 Temporary Fencing and Key Deer Water Access

The property contains two known water sources: a natural solution hole and a groundwater monitoring well. To protect these resources while restricting general access to the rest of the site, the recommendations are to:

- Install a gate along Linda Street to allow Key deer to pass through onto the property. This gate would be similar to the gate located on Sandy Circle.
- Construct a temporary, fence enclosure connecting the Linda Street gate to the solution hole and monitoring well via a direct, straight pathway, minimizing the fenced footprint and disturbance to surrounding habitat (Exhibit 2).
- Use fencing materials and gate specifications consistent with USFWS Key deer fencing standards (e.g., appropriately spaced wire/mesh and gate openings).
- Coordinate the enclosure design and siting with USFWS prior to installation to confirm the approach supports, rather than restricts, deer access to water.
- Treat this fencing as temporary and removable/adjustable once the long-term site plan (Section 4) is finalized, so it does not conflict with future grading, utilities, or building placement.

3.2 Front Entrance Control: Deer Grate and Pedestrian Gate

At the main site entrance, the recommendation is a dual-access solution that keeps the entrance passable for vehicles and people while discouraging Key deer from wandering into the property:

- Install a cattle-guard-style deer grate across the vehicle entrance drive, allowing vehicle pass-through while deterring deer from crossing into paved/active areas of the site.
- Install a separate pedestrian gate adjacent to the grate for foot traffic, sized for ADA-compliant access and secured with signage and a lock or keypad for access control.
- Post signage at the entrance noting the presence of Key deer and any applicable speed or access guidance, both to protect the animals and to reduce liability exposure.

3.3 Short-Term Action Summary

Action	Purpose	Lead / Coordination	Est. Timeframe
Section 7 biological assessment	Federal ESA review of the combined short- and long-term plan	College + Consultant + USFWS	Initiate immediately

Action	Purpose	Lead / Coordination	Est. Timeframe
Linda Street gate + temporary fence to water sources	Provide Key deer access to solution hole and monitoring well	Facilities + USFWS	1–3 months
Interim securing of dilapidated structures	Limit safety/liability exposure while demolition funding is identified	Facilities	1–2 months, ongoing
Pedestrian entrance gate	Control public/foot access	Facilities/Contractor	2–6 months
Deer grate at front entrance	Control deer movement into active site areas	Facilities/Contractor	2–6 months
Site signage	Key deer awareness, wayfinding, liability	Facilities/Marketing	Concurrent

4. Long-Term Strategy: Workforce Training Center

The long-term recommendation is to develop the property as a dedicated Workforce Training Center supporting the College's career and technical education (CTE) mission, sited within the same lease and county/federal approval framework described in Section 2. The site's size and Big Pine Key location make it well suited for hands-on, space-intensive programs that are difficult to accommodate on the main campus, while also serving Lower and Middle Keys students, employers, and residents directly.

4.1 Demolition of Existing Dilapidated Structures (Funding-Contingent)

The property currently contains sixteen (16) dilapidated buildings that are no longer usable (Exhibit 1). Demolition serves three purposes: it removes safety and liability hazards, it clears and “scarifies” the developed footprint that the long-term workforce training center should reuse (see Section 4.2), and it gives the College an accurate baseline site condition to include in its Land Use Plan submission. Because demolition and debris removal represent a capital cost that has not yet been funded, this item is treated as a long-term action contingent on identifying a funding source such as capital funds, a competitive grant, or other funding source, rather than a short-term task the College can begin without a designated budget. Recommended steps once funding is identified:

- Commission a pre-demolition survey, including asbestos and other hazardous materials assessment, for all sixteen structures before any demolition contract is issued, consistent with the lease's hazardous-substance and environmental-compliance provisions.
- Sequence demolition and debris removal as part of the Land Use Plan submission to the Division of State Lands.
- Preserve the existing cleared/paved footprint where the structures currently sit; minimize demolition debris staging
- Pursue funding identification in parallel with the short-term site-protection work (Section 3), so demolition can begin as soon as a budget is secured rather than waiting until all other long-term planning is complete.

4.2 Site Planning Principle: Build on the Scarified Land

The single most important site-planning decision is to locate the workforce training center on the land already cleared by demolition of the sixteen existing structures (Section 4.1), rather than clearing vegetated habitat. This “build on scarified land” approach:

- Minimizes new habitat disturbance and directly supports a favorable Section 7 assessment outcome with USFWS.
- Aligns with Monroe County's Tier-based clearing limits for Big Pine Key, which restrict clearing of native habitat far more than reuse of already-disturbed footprints.
- Strengthens the state Land Use Plan submission by demonstrating the College is minimizing its development footprint on leased land.
- Keeps the rear of the parcel closest to Linda Street, including the solution hole and monitoring well, available as Key deer habitat and water access.
- Provides privacy and a visual buffer between the workforce training center and the adjacent residential neighborhood by concentrating development within the already-cleared area and preserving existing vegetation along the site perimeter, helping minimize the facility’s visual and physical presence from neighboring properties.

4.3 Proposed Program Areas

Recommended program areas to anchor the workforce training center:

- Skilled Trades Apprenticeship Programs — shared shop/lab learning space with bays or stations for:
 - HVAC installation and repair
 - Plumbing
 - Electrical
 - Carpentry

Please note this proposed use was deemed appropriate and in-demand in the aftermath of Hurricane Irma. The decision to proceed with construction-based apprenticeships, pre-apprenticeships, or even unaffiliated construction training should be based on the current regional demand for specific occupational training as facilities planning is undertaken. Some type of flexible lab space for adaptive trades training such as marine or automotive technology remain desirable.

- Marine Environmental Technology — an aquaculture facility (e.g., tanks, wet lab, and outdoor grow systems) supporting hands-on training in marine and environmental technology, aligned with the Keys' marine economy and environmental monitoring needs. This would include sustainable, environmentally proven strategies to capture and reuse rainwater.
- Aquaponics System — an integrated aquaponics operation pairing with the aquaculture facility to supply produce for the College's culinary program, through the potential Grimal Grove partnership, and the broader community.

Of the 106 responses to the *Community Feedback Form – Big Pine Key Property*, there were 87 mentions which supported a workforce training center and/or environmental education/activities.

4.4 Commercial Driver’s License (CDL) and IPS Vehicular Training

Commercial Driver’s License (CDL) and Institute for Public Safety (IPS) vehicular training are potential program areas for the Big Pine Key property alongside the trades and marine/aquaponics concepts described above. However, community sentiment to offer CDL training at this property has not been favorable. Of the 106 responses to the *Community Feedback Form – Big Pine Key Property*, 57 mentions opposed CDL training at the

Big Pine Key property, while only two mentions supported it. In addition, one mention was opposed to the IPS vehicular training track.

The CDL training pad requires less than ½ an acre and 11B-21.005, F.A.C. requires the IPS vehicular training track include a paved area of at least 300 feet by 600 feet. Both potential training opportunities were included in the \$2 million Community Project Funding grant proposal to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The release of these funds is contingent upon the successful completion of the Section 7 biological assessment.

HUD does not have the legal authority to approve a change of scope for a Community Project Funding grant if the change departs from the original project approved by Congress in the Joint Explanatory Statement. The FY2023 Community Project Funding Grant Agreement No. B-23-CP-FL-0407 states the grant “is made pursuant to the authority of the Consolidated Appropriations Act 2023 (Public Law 117-103) and the Explanatory Statement for Division I of that Act, which was printed in the Senate section of the Congressional Record on December 20, 2022”. The Senate section of the Congressional Record dated December 20, 2022, states “Big Pine Key Prison to Workforce Training Center” as the project. It does not include or reference any programs that would be offered at the Workforce Training Center. As such, a change in scope may be permissible via grant amendment.

If the College decides to pursue local CDL and/or IPS vehicular training, it is recommended that an alternate location elsewhere in Monroe County be identified and evaluated that can better accommodate the paved truck pad and vehicular training track, rather than developing it at the Big Pine Key property.

4.5 Aquaponics Partnership Opportunity: Grimal Grove

Grimal Grove is an established orcharding farm on Big Pine Key. It is operated as Grimal Grove LLC, a for profit entity, along with nonprofit activities from the Growing Hope Foundation. It has an existing track record in hands-on orcharding education, including school tours for area youth, and an on-site farmstand model for selling tropical fruits to the community, with a current plan to extend this to processed items made from its fruits. Being less than one mile from CFK’s Big Pine Key property makes Grimal Grove a strong, low-risk partner for the College's growth into aquaponics.

- Shared best practices – the College's system could adopt growing techniques and species selections already proven in Grimal Grove's Big Pine Key growing conditions.
- Community produce sales – following Grimal Grove's existing farm-stand model, the College could establish a student-run produce stand or market day where CFK Academy, culinary, and aquaponics students sell surplus aquaponics produce and produce value-added processed food items to the community, giving students direct experience in production, harvest, and small-business/retail operations.
- Cross-promotion and enrollment pipeline – Grimal Grove's existing relationships with various Florida Keys schools and youth programs could help introduce younger students to the College's CTE pathways.
- Future educational classroom and meeting space – Grimal Grove LLC is in the final process for approval of a 5,000 square foot educational teaching and research facility. This would be a perfect affiliation for CFK to introduce more educational programs at Big Pine Key.

This partnership should be explored as a memorandum of understanding regardless of the decision to develop the Big Pine Key property. While proximity is preferred, the College has a small aquaponics operation on the main campus in Key West that would benefit from this potential collaboration.

4.6 Site Planning Considerations

The long-term site plan should be designed to minimize impervious surface and habitat fragmentation while still meeting program needs:

- Site the workforce training center on the scarified footprint of the demolished structures (Section 4.1) rather than clearing additional habitat, thereby clustering buildings and paved areas toward the front/entrance portion of the site.
- Preserve the rear of the property closest to Linda Street (including the solution hole and monitoring well area) as open space accessible to wildlife.
- Plan stormwater management and any aquaculture/aquaponics wastewater or overflow systems to minimize impacts to the solution hole and groundwater monitoring well.
- Sequence design so the Section 7 biological assessment (Section 2.3) and the state Land Use Plan approval (Section 2.1) inform the site plan before final design and construction documents are prepared, rather than being pursued after design is complete.
- Coordinate with Monroe County land development regulations specific to Big Pine Key/No Name Key (Section 2.2).

4.7 Phased Development Approach

Phase	Scope	Key Dependencies	Indicative Timeline
Phase 0	Section 7 biological assessment; short-term protective fencing/grate; interim securing of dilapidated structures	USFWS; Monroe County; Consultant	Year 1
Phase 1	Identify a capital funding source for demolition (state CTE capital funds, grant, etc.); commission hazardous materials survey	Capital budget identification; funding process	Year 1–2, funding-contingent
Phase 2	Demolish the sixteen dilapidated structures; scarify the building footprint	Phase 1 funding secured; Monroe County coordination; Section 7 assessment coverage	Following funding award
Phase 3	Land Use Plan submission covering the full long-term concept; site survey and conceptual master plan on the scarified footprint	FDEP Division of State Lands approval; USFWS Section 7 outcome; completed demolition	Following Phase 2
Phase 4	Design and self-permitting for Workforce Training Center building and site infrastructure (utilities, parking, access road)	Monroe County coordination; funding; Lessor design approval	Following Phase 3
Phase 5	Construct Workforce Training Center (e.g. HVAC, plumbing, electrical, carpentry)	Phase 4 approvals; construction funding	Following Phase 4
Phase 6	Construct aquaculture and aquaponics system, including capture and reuse rainwater	Water/wastewater permitting;	Following Phase 5
Phase 7	Program launch, industry partnerships, and community produce sales	Enrollment/staffing; advisory committee	Following Phase 6

4.8 Community and Industry Alignment

A Big Pine Key workforce training center would fill a documented need for the Lower and Middle Keys where residents currently travel to Key West for CTE programming. Trade apprenticeships could address the region's

persistent shortage of licensed HVAC, plumbing, electrical, and construction workers, which is acute given the Keys' ongoing rebuilding and resilience-construction needs. The marine environmental technology and aquaculture components align with the Keys' marine-based economy and could support partnerships with local marine industry employers, environmental agencies, and research organizations (e.g., NOAA, Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary). The aquaponics-to-culinary pipeline, paired with the potential Grimal Grove partnership, offers a distinctive, sustainability-oriented complement to the College's existing culinary program, a potential source of program-grown produce, and a direct community produce-sales opportunity for students.

5. Regulatory and Approval Roadmap

Because this is leased land, the following approvals gate the project and should be tracked as a single coordinated roadmap rather than sequential, siloed processes:

Approval / Requirement	Authority	Applies To	Status / Note
Land Use Plan approval	FDEP Division of State Lands (Lessor)	All development, alteration, and construction on the leased premises	Required before permitting, design, or construction — not yet approved for the full long-term concept
Section 7 biological assessment / consultation	Consultant, Monroe County, and USFWS	Demolition and training center construction	Still needs to be conducted
Land development / demolition / building permits	Monroe County	Demolition of 16 structures; new construction; site clearing	College is self-permitting; site plans shared with the County; demolition sequencing pending funding identification
Archaeological/historic site review	FL Division of Historical Resources	Land Use Plan review under Chapter 267, F.S.	Included as part of Land Use Plan process

6. Summary Recommendation

1. Initiate the Section 7 biological assessment immediately, covering the short-term protective measures, the eventual demolition, and the long-term training center footprint as one combined project scope.
2. Proceed with the short-term Key deer protection measures including the Linda Street gate and temporary fence enclosure to the solution hole and monitoring well, plus the entrance deer grate and pedestrian gate to be coordinated with USFWS.
3. Prepare and submit the state Land Use Plan required under Lease Number 4863 as the controlling document for this proposal with demolition and the long-term training center concept layered in once a funding source is secured.

4. In the interim, secure the sixteen dilapidated structures to limit safety and liability exposure while a capital funding source for demolition is identified.
5. Identify and pursue a capital funding source (e.g., capital improvement fee, competitive grant, etc.) dedicated to demolition of the sixteen dilapidated structures; treat this as the gating item for the long-term training center rather than a short-term task.
6. Once funding is secured, commission a hazardous materials survey and demolish the structures, preserving the resulting scarified footprint as the designated building envelope for the long-term training center.
7. Commission a conceptual site master plan for the Workforce Training Center that can flexibly accommodate current and future CTE needs that builds on the scarified footprint, clusters development near the entrance, and preserves the rear (Linda Street) of the parcel for wildlife access.
8. Pursue phased design, permitting, and construction of Workforce Training Center building, followed by the aquaculture/aquaponics facility, sequenced to available funding and Lessor/County approvals.
9. Formalize a partnership with Grimal Grove. This partnership can proceed independent of the property's development timeline and build additional industry and agency partnerships (local trades, marine/environmental organizations) early.
10. If the College decides to pursue local CDL and IPS vehicular training, locate that program at an alternate site elsewhere in Monroe County rather than the Big Pine Key property, given the community opposition described in Section 4.4.

EXHIBIT 1

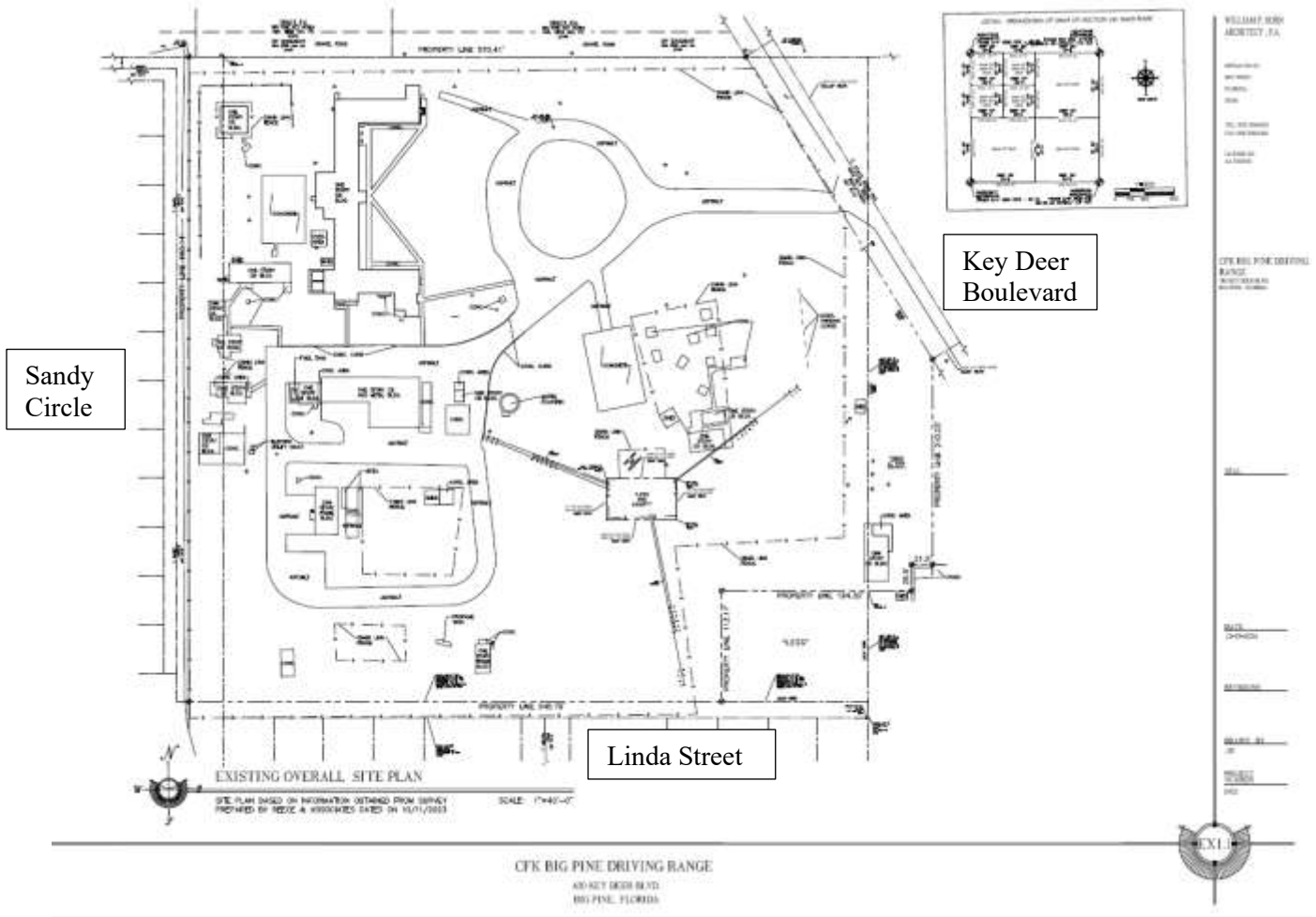


EXHIBIT 2

