

OPEN LETTER TO THE PALM BEACH GARDENS CITY COUNCIL

***The communities around Alton need your help
We have one chance to get this right***

January 26, 2022

Dear City Council members—

The *Palm Beach Post* reported last week that the acquisition of Scripps by the University of Florida is the last chance for the Scripps biotech village promise to be achieved. The January 19, 2022, article rightly points that out too.

“The vision from nearly 20 years ago was a development center in northern Palm Beach County that would attract biomedical and pharmaceutical research to the area. It was promised to bring new jobs that diversified the region’s economy beyond traditional industries like tourism and agriculture. But that idea didn’t reach fruition.”

Now PBG residents in the area face two daunting and enormous development proposals that will forever change our community. We have but one chance to get this right.

We urge you, as our elected officials, to take a step back and assess the remaining developable parcels in Alton in a unified and comprehensive manner. Most importantly, this comprehensive review should be done through the lens of what is real and achievable today versus the failed promise of 20 years ago. The densities granted then, may have been justified given the promised benefits of high-paying jobs, life-saving research and innovative bio-science incubators, but that is not the reality we face today.

In order to protect our community, ensure the quality of life of residents is respected, and to protect the long-term identity of this part of Palm Beach Gardens, we urge the council to view this as a new overlay and conduct new traffic studies that reflect the true impact to our community as well as seek to achieve the most beneficial projects are built that add value to our city in the least disruptive way that respects neighbors, taxpayers and those of us who proudly call Palm Beach Gardens home.

You have one chance to get this right. We implore you to exercise it.

Concerned PBG Neighbors,

Som Bhattacharya

Sergio Lopez

Charleene Bridget O'Connor

Debbie McDonough

William & Donna Striebe

Jane Bruno

Rossana Vazquez

William Steiner

Vicki Hess

Brooke Luchs

Amy Stern

Bryan Horveath

Tim McGowan

Alisha Cohen

With \$100 sale, will University of Florida fulfill Scripps promise of biotech village in Jupiter?

The key may lie in 70 acres in the Alton community in Palm Beach Gardens, which Florida's flagship university can develop into a research science center.



Katherine Kokal

Palm Beach Post

Jan 19, 2022



JUPITER — The ink is drying on the \$100 deal that lets the University of Florida buy both the Scripps Research Institute in Jupiter and its significant land holdings in Palm Beach Gardens.

Area leaders and the state and county taxpayers who shelled out nearly \$600 million to bring Scripps to Florida are anxious to know whether the state's flagship university can fulfill a promise the California-based research institute made a decade ago: that it would turn northern Palm Beach County into a destination for biotech innovation.



To do so, UF will need to develop 70 acres south of Donald Ross Road in Palm Beach Gardens as a biotech village and attract new talent and research programs to the existing three-building research campus across the road in Jupiter.

"At the end of the day, the leadership of Scripps California was not really interested in Scripps Florida," Karen Marcus, a former Palm Beach County commissioner who became a Scripps consultant, told The Palm Beach Post on Tuesday.

"I'm hoping that the combination of (UF and Scripps) helps us to do what we envisioned in the beginning."

Two decades later, 500 jobs but no biotech hub

The vision from nearly 20 years ago was of a development center in northern Palm Beach County that would attract biomedical and pharmaceutical research to the area. It was promised to bring new jobs that diversified the region's economy beyond traditional industries like tourism and agriculture.

But the idea didn't reach fruition.

While Scripps has created about 500 jobs at its Jupiter site, 70 acres remain empty in the Alton community in Palm Beach Gardens that Palm Beach County purchased to expand the campus.

Scripps bought that land from the county for just \$1 in May 2021.

Now UF will hold the key to development of the property, and with it, the future of biotech advancement in northern Palm Beach County.

What will the future hold for Scripps campus, 70 acres in Alton?

Information from Scripps and UF, although minimal, suggests an expansion of research and collaboration with scientists working for UF Health, the university's academic health center.

UF told The Palm Beach Post on Tuesday it doesn't yet have concrete plans for the Alton property, but that it will hire more faculty to start working at its newly acquired campus in the next five years.

According to UF Health spokesperson Ken Garcia, those faculty members will likely focus on research in data science and artificial intelligence.



While the Scripps campus is being transitioned to UF Health's research arm, scientists there will likely collaborate with other parts of UF Health for projects on cancer, drug discovery, immunology and infectious diseases, neuroscience, HIV/AIDS and structural biology.

Garcia said Tuesday the transition officially will begin in early April and that UF will release more details about its plans closer to that time.

The closing date was pushed back to ensure there would be enough time to transition employees to UF and to maintain their benefits. The delay also allows more time to transfer grants and visas to UF, a process dependent on the federal government.

Leadership changes are expected on the campus as well.

UF will appoint a site director and a leadership council for the Scripps campus. Those leaders will report to David Nelson, UF Health's president and the university's senior vice president for health affairs.

Scripps scientists will be transferred to UF Health at the same pay rate. Those who held tenured positions with Scripps will be likely to keep their tenure with UF along with an additional Scripps title.

Included in the sale to UF was the ability to use the internationally known Scripps name, all future royalties from programs or discoveries at the Jupiter campus and \$102 million in cash and investments in research projects.

Marcus, who pushed for Scripps to come to Jupiter during the last of her 28 years as a county commissioner, said the sale to UF hopefully will bring new energy to developing the 70 acres in Alton.

"We're getting an organization, a university, that can step up and finish the vision," she said. Now the area will need "medical offices, incubator space, space for attorneys who do intellectual property work, maybe even a teaching hospital" in the Alton area, Marcus said.

Universal Health Services has proposed building a 32.3-acre medical campus in Alton that would include a 270-bed hospital and medical offices. It was unclear Tuesday how that development, which would be built on land outside Scripps' 70 acres, would fit into any UF-Scripps plan.

Business leaders in north county have lauded the UF purchase, saying they hope it brings high-paying jobs, new investment and medical services to the Jupiter-area's economy.

Noel Martinez, the president and chief executive of the Palm Beach North Chamber of Commerce, called it an "excellent move for our region." He said Scripps has made "pioneering discoveries and has a greatly respected global reputation."

"Adding the brilliant minds of one of the state's top universities is going to not only lead to science and health advancements, but will stimulate our region's economy," he added.

UF gets second sweet deal in Palm Beach County

The sale highlights UF's growing footprint in Palm Beach County.

The school is planning to build a campus in downtown West Palm Beach for 1,000 graduate students to take classes in financial services, financial technology and artificial intelligence.

After receiving unanimous support from elected officials in West Palm Beach and Palm Beach County in September, plans moved forward for a campus along Datura and Evernia streets north of Okeechobee Boulevard.



But commissioners were surprised to learn in December that the land they voted to donate to UF was more valuable than originally thought, and that UF was considering building a hotel on the property.

The property appraiser's office gave the county-owned 5 acres of public land an assessed value of \$12.8 million. But the market value of this land, based on the average of two appraisals sought by the county's staff, amounted to \$42 million.

Commissioners are expected to vote later this month on terms for a deal with the University of Florida. UF representatives said space for a hotel or businesses in West Palm Beach would happen "down the road."

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