



Hernando Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society
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July 28, 2026

Christopher Linsbeck, Director
Hernando County Community Services Department
15365 Cortez Boulevard
Brooksville, Florida 34613

SUBJECT: Conceptual Design Alternatives for Observation Tower at Pedersen Park

Dear Director Linsbeck:

The Hernando Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society (HCFNPS) appreciated the opportunity to review the alternatives being considered for a new observation tower at Linda Pedersen Park (Park). The pre-existing tower provided Hernando County residents and visitors with breathtaking views of our pristine coastline and fostered a deeper appreciation for, and enjoyment of, our natural and scenic riches. It was one of our community's most iconic landmarks and we are pleased that construction of a replacement tower is being considered.

We favor the steel structure over the wooden alternative based on several factors: 1) its predicted longevity, relative to that of the wooden option; 2) its superior resistance to wind damage and the severe weathering associated with exposure to coastal environments; and 3) its ability to be built to a higher elevation than a wooden tower. As demonstrated by the simulations you shared, the vista observable at 50 feet would extend to the mouth of the Weeki Wachee River and the open waters of the Gulf and encompass much more of the Jenkins Creek system and adjoining Weekiwachee Preserve. Constructing a tower to the same 30-foot elevation as the pre-existing tower would likely necessitate eventual removal of surrounding trees to simply maintain the more limited view observable at 30 feet. Accounting for the retention of existing native trees should be considered a priority in this kind of park setting.

Any future observation tower should also be integrated into the surrounding Park, rather than be regarded as a stand-alone feature. As such, we also appreciated the proposal to include an open public space around the tower; however, we are also sensitive to the fiscal implications of including the lawn area as conceived in the preliminary design proposals. It was noteworthy to us that the projected cost of the lawn area exceeded that of the steel tower.

We see construction of a new observation tower at the Park as a highly worthwhile investment and believe the additional cost of choosing the steel design can be justified as the most desirable and cost-effective option. If inclusion of the lawn area is determined to be cost prohibitive, then we believe attractive, less expensive design alternatives could be considered for the area immediately surrounding the future tower.

Thank you for this opportunity to share our observations. We would also be pleased to share guidance on how native plants can be incorporated into the design of the grounds surrounding the proposed tower location.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Renee Holcomb".

Renee Holcomb, President
Hernando Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society

cc: Ann Redmond, President, Florida Native Plant Society