

# FSU College of Medicine eyes site near Sabal Palm for clinic

Byron Dobson, Democrat senior writer Published 1:27 p.m. ET March 29, 2017 | Updated 6:34 p.m. ET March 29, 2017

*College says few medical options exist for low to moderate residents in the area*



(Photo: Florida State)

Florida State University's College of Medicine is floating the idea of establishing a medical clinic in southwest Tallahassee where its students and faculty could treat moderate and low-income patients.

Dean John P. Fogarty, in a letter Tuesday to elected officials and health-care providers, said the college is exploring a location at 2908 Ridgeway St., across from Sabal Palm Elementary School.

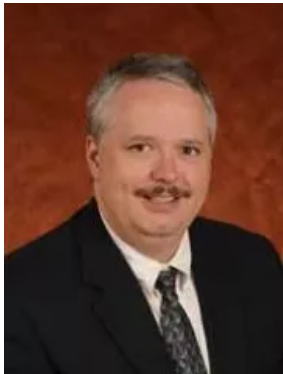
Fogarty said the property is university-owned and located in a diverse, medically underserved community.

"Now that we are near 16 years of operation at the College of Medicine and have recruited our next generation of faculty, we need to identify a clinical setting to allow our newer faculty to both practice their skills and help offset their clinical salary," Fogarty told the Democrat.

"In keeping with our mission to serve the underserved, we are looking at sites that both meet that mission and provide a teaching site for our medical and PA students in the future."

The news comes eight months after the college abandoned efforts to build a medical center across from the Renaissance Center in Frenchtown.

[That proposal was sharply opposed by community activists \(/story/news/2016/08/02/controversy-stifles-fsu-medical-facility-plans/87729804/\)](/story/news/2016/08/02/controversy-stifles-fsu-medical-facility-plans/87729804/) and officers of the Neighborhood Medical Center, who said building a second medical facility three blocks from its base on Brevard Street would be a death knell for the more than 40-year-old center.



**Dr. Daniel J. Van Durme, associate dean for outreach at the FSU College of Medicine.** (Photo: Florida State University)

Dr. Daniel J. Van Durme, associate dean for clinical and community affairs, said the college has been looking at sites for several months. The Ridgeway property seemed to be the best option, he said, for several reasons, including demographics, its proximity to the college and the fact there are few health care centers in the area.

Within a one-mile radius of the site, the percentage of both black and Hispanic residents is nearly double that of Tallahassee as a whole. The median household income of less than \$22,000 is about half of the Tallahassee average.

"The current buildings on the site are the old Florida Highway Patrol dormitories and training center and there is an adjacent vacant lot," Van Durme said. "One of the key elements of our work will be to explore costs of renovating and refurbishing the existing buildings compared to building a new facility on the vacant lot."

Under the Frenchtown plan, the college proposed building a two-story, 28,000-square-foot center. The cost was estimated at \$4 million, with the city of Tallahassee agreeing to donate the land.

At that time, college officials said their first choice would be a location closer to campus.

Van Durme said it is too early to say what size center the college would envision if plans for the southwest location are accepted.

“Our announcement was to engage stakeholders and begin these conversations,” he said. “We are still in the exploration stages and we want to actively engage the local neighborhood. We want to learn their health care needs and whether a local clinic would be desirable and what services may be most needed.”

Conversations also will be held with existing health care agencies and centers, including Bond Community Health Center and Neighborhood Medical Center, to see if there is interest in collaboration.

“I think this would be a great addition to the community,” said Anicia Robinson, principal at Sabal Palm Elementary. “It would provide access, everything would be in walking distance.”

Van Durme said the timeframe for making a decision depends on what feedback is received and a cost analysis.

“Although we do not have a specific target date, we know there are enormous unmet health care needs in our community and we are eager to step up and help meet those needs while also teaching our students how they can and should meet these needs in the future,” he said.

Contact senior writer Byron Dobson at [bdobson@tallahassee.com](mailto:bdobson@tallahassee.com) (<mailto:bdobson@tallahassee.com>) or on Twitter [@byrondobson](https://twitter.com/byrondobson).

Read or Share this story: <http://on.tdo.com/2nAEoNC>