

# World Trade Center Beam to Be Part of Tampa Memorial

## Mike Salinero

A steel girder from the fallen World Trade Center may find a home in Ybor City alongside a Hillsborough County sheriff's history museum and a memorial park for fallen officers.

Preliminary plans call for the girder to be displayed near the streetcar stop at Eighth Avenue and 20th Street and next to the proposed memorial park, said sheriff's Lt. Chad Chronister.

Across the parking lot from the park and girder memorial, a museum showcasing 160 years of sheriff's office history will be displayed in a historic "casita," which is Spanish for the small homes inhabited by cigar workers in the early 20th century.

"It will be part of the Ybor City tour," Chronister said of the three attractions. "They will make Ybor City even more of a desirable destination for tourists."

The final location for the girder still must be approved by the county's Public Arts Committee at its Feb. 14 meeting.

Steel girders from the trade center, destroyed by terrorists on Sept. 11, 2001, were made available to more than 1,100 local governments by the Port Authority of New York & New Jersey. Tampa received two pieces, one of which is displayed on Bayshore Boulevard leading into MacDill Air Force Base. The other is in the Tampa Firefighters Museum.

Sheriff David Gee obtained the county's girder in April 2011 after requesting one a couple of years earlier, said sheriff's spokesman J.D. Callaway. The sheriff had to send a trailer to bring the beam back to Tampa.

"One of the stipulations was, if you wanted a piece, you had to go get it. And that's what we did," Callaway said.

County Commissioner Mark Sharpe persuaded the commission to appropriate \$50,000 for engineering and conceptual work. Another \$200,000 was appropriated through the county's Public Art Program for construction.

The Public Art Committee created a sub-panel to work on finding a location for the girder and a design for the memorial. A request for designs, sweetened with a \$5,000 prize for the winner, drew 28 submissions.

The panel members chose several designs they thought stood out, but a final choice was put on hold because of uncertainty about the girder's final destination.

Originally, the subcommittee had considered putting the girder at Tampa's Cotanchobee Fort Brooke Park on the Garrison Channel waterfront. After some discussion, however, subcommittee members decided the park was too small for the 14-foot, 1,500-pound steel beam.

"Yes, you could put something in there, but it would look crowded," said Eric Larson, Sharpe's aide and a member of the site committee. "It would have just been too much in too small of a place."

Joe Chillura Courthouse Square Park, across from the Frederick B. Karl County Center downtown, also was considered, but some members of the subcommittee felt the beam would put the other monuments in the park "out of balance."

"Anytime you place a memorial to honor victims or heroes, it needs to be treated with a great deal of certainty," said Kenneth Cowart, an architect and member of the subcommittee. "Nobody on the site committee was certain Chillura Park was the right place."

The site indecision has delayed the selection of a design. But Chronister said he thinks it will get this done this year, along with the museum and park.

"This is very important to the sheriff," Chronister said. "This is something he wants to have built, and he wants to have it built sooner rather than later."