

One block of 56th St. set for streetscape test of design ideas

Compiled by Debbie Carson
Staff Writer

Before Temple Terrace can get started on its downtown redevelopment project, the city has plans to renovate 56th Street and Busch Boulevard. However, before the city spends \$5.7 million worth of grants on the full-scale streetscape renovations, city leaders are planning a smaller, pilot project.

The smaller target area will consist of Temple Heights Road and one block of 56th Street. The purpose of narrowing down the area is to test design ideas, according to officials.

The city is working with landscape architect Rachel Rodgers, president of L.A. Design, to establish prototype guidelines that can later be employed throughout the redevelopment area.

"We decided to create a prototypical block because we needed to address the reality of the site conditions," Rodgers said. "The whole idea is to create design guidelines. What we're trying to do is reach aesthetic ideals, to get a roadway that looks different and creates some kind of unique character for the community."

Planners will study lighting and crosswalk features, safety enhancements, irrigation designs and landscaping ideas.

During the next few years, city leaders expect to invest \$5.7 million into road improvements in the downtown redevelopment area. Officials estimate that the majority of the money will come from federal, state and local grants.

"The City has really worked hard," said

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working with local merchants to make trash bags available at area boat ramps.

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Community Services Director Ralph Bosek. "We've looked under every rock to help us find ways to finance this project."

The planned improvements are part of Temple Terrace's redevelopment strategy for the 56th Street corridor. The city is in the process of creating a 38-acre New Urbanism-style center with retail, commercial, office, residential and cultural/civic uses from Bullard Parkway to the Hillsborough River. Analysts say improving 56th Street is a key component in the redevelopment project's success.

Plans call for landscaping, additional signalization, benches, bike racks, decorative lighting and more.

"It's really going to add some pizzazz to those streets," Bosek said.

Rodgers said it is important that the streets within the redevelopment area are pedestrian-friendly, as well as safe and convenient for motorists.

"I think one of the driving points for the project was to create shade for pedestrians, to make it a more comfortable and livable place for people to spend time," she said. "What we're trying to do more than anything else is create some continuity on the roadway, from the driver's eye and the pedestrian's eye."

Rodgers, Bosek, City Engineer Joe Motta and a selected consultant will spend 60 to 90 days completing the pilot project's design. Construction on that project is slated to begin in 2007 and should take about six months, Bosek said. Construction on the larger-scale 56th Street/Busch Boulevard project likely will begin in 2008.

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