

Will Masque stay in downtown or be homeless?

By Debbie Carson, Staff Writer

TEMPLE TERRACE — While the city hires a \$9360 consultant to look into the viability of an arts center within the targeted downtown redevelopment area, one council member has questioned what would happen to Masque, the city's community theatre.

Councilman Ken Halloway voiced concerns that Masque would be without a home once the developer, Pinnacle/Ram, closes on the purchase of the nearly 18-acre site on the southeast corner of Bullard Parkway and N. 56th Street.

If city leaders don't find a place for it in the downtown area or elsewhere in the city, Masque could either move out of Temple Terrace or cease to exist.

It's a prospect Halloway said he doesn't want to see.

Councilman Ron Govin, who has been the city's point man for the negotiations with Pinnacle/Ram, said that the development team has agreed to keep Masque in its current location for at least 12 months. He said that the city could try to push Pinnacle/Ram to keep Masque for longer but that would be iffy at best.

"I hope we get that in writing," Halloway said.

Govin said that it could be possible that Masque could be homeless for three to four months between the time it needs to move out of its current home south of Sweetbay and could move into the Arts and Education Center.

In the meantime, though, Govin said that the city would work with Masque to find another place within the community for the theatre to go – perhaps at a church or some other building.

However, if the city were to later decide not to move forward with the Arts and Education Center – which is not a done deal at this stage – the fate of Masque would again be up in the air.

The Temple Terrace City Council voted last week to hire Collman & Karsky Architects and Toppe Consultants Inc. for \$9,360 to perform a feasibility study to determine whether or not the center would work in the downtown redevelopment area.

The Arts and Education Center could be built to the north of Sweetbay and could serve as a place for the city to hold all of its arts classes under one roof.

Under the current arrangement with Pinnacle/Ram, the city would retain ownership of one acre of property where the center would be built at the city's expense.

City leaders are organizing a fund-raising group to reach out to the community in search of pledges for the center, should the council approve it.

Mayor Joe Affronti told the council during last Tuesday's meeting that Hillsborough Community College has expressed interest in having a classroom at the center.

Also during the council meeting last week, the city heard that progress was being made in its negotiations with Pinnacle/Ram.

The developer submitted a preliminary site plan for the project, which will go before the council for approval at the next meeting, Feb. 19.

Also, the city is expected to approve the sales-purchase agreement between the city and

Pinnacle/Ram during the Feb. 19 meeting, which would keep the city and developer on track to seal the deal by July.

If all goes as is currently planned, construction on the first phase could start before the end of the year.

Pinnacle/Ram is continuing to work with several of the business currently located within the targeted redevelopment site, including Regions Bank, Burger King and Sweetbay Supermarket.

Govin told the council last week that officials from Pinnacle/Ram would be meeting Sweetbay representatives later this month to work out a letter of intent in an attempt to reach an agreement on how Sweetbay's property would be impacted by the redevelopment.

Pinnacle/Ram is also close to reaching an agreement to move Regions Bank farther north in the site and is in the midst of negotiations with Burger King.

On the Web:

- www.cnewspubs.com/beacon where you can read our archives of Temple Terrace downtown news stories.
- www.masquetheatre.net