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## Ultimatum: Downtown developer has 2 weeks to fix plan

***Govin's Plan X shows payoff in 2033***

By Debbie Carson

*Staff Writer*

Temple Terrace's downtown master developer has until Feb. 20 to create a plan with numbers the City Council will accept or face being thrown out in the seven-year saga to rebuild downtown.

The City Council unanimously voted at its meeting Feb. 6 to give Pinnacle/Ram two weeks to craft a viable plan that requires less financial support from the city. If the developer cannot deliver a winning plan, the city said that it would move on to yet another

firm.

To date, Temple Terrace has not paid Pinnacle/Ram for its work, according to Mike Dunn, a spokesman for the city. All of the work has been done in an effort to agree on a contract for the project. If the city drops Pinnacle/Ram, the developer would not be paid.

For more than two hours, city leaders and representatives from the developing team haggled over the project.

Pinnacle/Ram's financial figures show the city paying \$21 million for its part of the redevelopment effort.

An alternate plan that Councilman Ron Govin worked out, tweaking Pinnacle/Ram's plan, shows the city paying \$15.7 million.

The main differences between the developer's plan and Govin's "Plan X" include the purchase price of the city-acquired property and the location of various tenants.

Govin said after the meeting that his plan leaves both Sweetbay and Masque Community Theater where they are.

Sweetbay, the largest surviving tenant with a favorable lease that could go for decades, has been a sore spot for the city

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and developer. According to Skipper Peek, of Pinnacle/Ram, the grocery store requires more than \$3 million to leave its current location and move elsewhere within the redevelopment site.

The developer believes the city should have to pay to move Sweetbay. Councilman Ken Halloway has publicly said several times that he does not support that idea and believes the developer should have to pay.

Both plans show that the city would be in the black by the end of construction in the early 2030s.

Pinnacle/Ram's plan shows that the city would have \$25.9 million at the end, while Plan X shows \$41 million.

"In the year 2033, we pay for this," Govin said of Plan X.

Peek could not speak to the viability of Plan X, saying that he was looking at the numbers for the first time at the meeting.

Along with voicing concerns over how much money the city would be expected to invest in the project, council members also criticized Pinnacle/Ram for not offering the full purchase price of the property the city has already bought for the project.

Pinnacle/Ram has currently offered \$2 million less for the land than what the city paid for it. The developer has cited the anticipated difference in value between raw land and the property as it currently is - with various buildings and other improvements on it.

As the night wore on, city leaders began to express additional frustrations with the process and the developer.

Mayor Joe Affronti recalled Pinnacle/Ram's presentation in mid-December when the developer asked for conceptual approval of the plan.

Affronti reminded the council that Peek had said that if the city could not agree on the plan then the city should find someone else for the job.

Peek responded by saying that the firm could come up with a couple alternative plans for comparison. One plan, he suggested, could show Sweetbay remaining where it is and another plan could be "unbridled" - reflecting what the regular open market could do with the property and keeping the city's goal in mind.

By the end of the meeting, the council came up with two options to choose from - let Pinnacle/Ram go and move on to the next developer, or give the developer a chance to craft a new plan.

that's what we can afford," said Councilman Mark Knapp.

Peek voiced concerns regarding spending the following two weeks to come up with the plans without any guarantee that the city would accept them.

"We've worked really hard," he said. "It's been very fruitful for the city."

Peek said that he feared the city would take Pinnacle/Ram's plans and numbers and use them with a different developer. The city's leaders did not address Peek's concerns.

Pinnacle/Ram is expected to present new plans at the Feb. 20 City Council meeting, starting at 7 p.m.

If the city does not accept any of the plans, the city council plans on moving on to Temple Terrace Investments LLC, the next developer in line for a shot at the redevelopment project.

The firm is a partnership of Vlass Group, MJ Lant Developments Inc., and Marketplace Advisors Inc.

Last year, when the city heard proposals from four companies, staff recommended Temple Terrace Investments over Pinnacle/Ram.

Michael Vlass, of the Temple Terrace Investments, told the council at the time, that none of the other firms had presented a plan that establishes "the place." He said looking at the plans, he could not figure out why anyone would want to go to the downtown area as designed by the other companies.

"We don't want to build another shopping center," he said during the interview process.

Councilman Halloway and other council members were put off by the fact that they would have to wait 60 days to see a plan from the Vlass group.

"If anything, I think your plan is not dense enough," a representative from Temple Terrace Investments told the council last year.

The developer reaffirmed the city's belief that incorporating civic uses and buildings in the project would help the downtown redevelopment effort succeed.

When Councilman Govin asked why the firm had not submitted a timetable or site plan for the Temple Terrace project, representatives said that they want to listen to the city's leaders and residents and the would-be tenants before moving forward.

"We listen very carefully," the representative said.

"Pinnacle/Ram's made a run at it," Govin said, pushing to fire the developer. "Let's move on to the next one and see what they come up with."

With a bit of trepidation, Govin told his fellow council members that Pinnacle/Ram has not been very flexible or accommodating in taking suggestions from the city.

"I haven't found Pinnacle/Ram very willing to listen," he said, explaining that the city has been shot down every time it has mentioned Sweetbay where it is.

Councilman Frank Chillura said that he agreed to a point but noted that if Pinnacle/Ram was given an opportunity to come up with a plan that was not as restricted as what the city ordered, the firm might be able to bring back some better numbers.

"It's time to move and get something to happen," Chillura said. "Time is of the essence."

"We wasted three years on this process," he added. Waiting two weeks for Pinnacle/Ram to present new plans would be nothing compared to the time the city has already spent, Chillura said.

Affronti said that he agreed with Govin's motion to move on to another firm. Affronti noted that because Govin has been working with Pinnacle/Ram for the last several weeks, he would know best.

Faced with the possibility of being cut loose, Peek told the council that the firm could create two plans in two or three weeks with financial figures attached. Though he preferred to have three weeks to get the work done, the city did not support holding a special meeting to accommodate the extended timeline.

"We need to get what we can because

*For the complete history on the Temple Terrace Redevelopment effort, visit The Beacon's Web site at [www.cnewspubs.com](http://www.cnewspubs.com). On the left, click "Temple Terrace." Once there, click "Downtown Redevelopment" on the right.*

## **CONCERNS, from page 1**

signs: "It would be very confusing." With the oddly configured nexus, it could be confusing to drivers who have the right of way, he explained.

Engineers also looked at installing raised and colored crosswalks, which would enhance pedestrian safety but do little for drivers.

Motta said, then, that the elliptical intersection is the best solution, not only because it solves the vehicular issues, and also because it is more aesthetically pleasing. There would be small landscaped islands in the intersection, adding to the neighborhood's appeal.

The city expects the creation of the intersection to cost between \$125,000 and \$150,000, which would be founded through the city's community investment program.

The expected speed limit going through the ellipse is currently planned for 15 mph, according to Motta.

Residents also questioned when the city would finish work on updating and improving rental codes.

Jack Ritter, who has lived in Temple Terrace for 61 years, pointed out what he considers a problem home across the street from him.

"It's just driving me crazy," he told city leaders.