

Downtown's site plan held over for more discussion Tuesday

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By Debbie Carson , Staff Writer

TEMPLE TERRACE — Temple Terrace city leaders decided last week to continue discussion on the proposed site plan for the downtown redevelopment project until 8 a.m. Tuesday, June 10.

The development team, Pinnacle/Ram, is asking for some changes to the amount of retail, office and live/work space it is required to have within the development.

Those requests, brought up at the City Council meeting on June 3, caused the city to schedule a special meeting for 8 a.m. Tuesday to discuss the issues and close the first of two required public hearings for the rezoning and site plan process.

Charles Stephenson, the city's community development director, told the council that he felt that the requests could be worked through.

"I don't think that there's anything we can't get to," he said.

Once the council closes its first public hearing on the matter on June 10, it will hold another special meeting at a later date for the second hearing. The special meetings, according to the council, are necessary to keep the project on track to close in July.

What had been planned as a July 1 closing on the deal has now become mid-July because the citizens – and other interested parties – have 30 days to appeal the public hearing on the rezoning application from the date of the second hearing. The sooner the city can get through the hearings, the sooner the clock starts ticking on the appeal period.

The early Tuesday morning meeting's time did not appear to concern council members that members of the public might not be able to attend.

As it was, only one member of the public spoke during the public hearing last Tuesday night, Grant Rimbey.

Rimbey told the council and the audience members that he was agreeable to the proposed site plan and renderings that Pinnacle/Ram had presented during the hearing.

"It's definitely more Temple Terrace-y than we had before," Rimbey said. He added that the council should be sure that the contract it has with Pinnacle/Ram is clear on the architecture and to keep on guard for the design to be "watered-down."

"I think it's the best that we can do right now," Rimbey said of the design plans, though he still has hopes for better for the second phase of the project.

Currently, the plan includes keeping the Burger King at the corner of N. 56th Street and Bullard Parkway for the time being. The restaurant has about five more years on its lease.

"They're open to relocation," said Bob Skinner, a representative from Ram Development, of the Burger King.

In its place, the developers plan to build a 2-story signature building to serve as a focal point for the community.

In all, there are plans for nine new buildings throughout the site and two new east/west roads to funnel traffic between N. 56th Street and the new north/south "Main Street."

Pinnacle/Ram's drawings depict palm tree landscaping throughout and continuous awnings traveling the length of most buildings. Some buildings will have colonnades instead of awning to provide pedestrians with shade.

The internal roads will be flanked with sidewalks and bike lanes and there will be plenty of bicycle parking, as well.

Councilman Mark Knapp asked Skinner about a Plan B, in the event the city decides not to move forward with the Arts and Education Center and the parking structure associated with it. Skinner told Knapp and the rest of the council that they had not planned for that contingency. However, the space freed up from the parking garage would still be used for parking.

"I just want to make sure we've got the bases covered," Knapp said of the issue. He had also asked about the architectural design of the 3-story live/work building that would adjoin the parking garage – wondering if the garage-side of the building would be redesigned to look nicer if the garage were removed.

Skinner said that they could dress it up a bit with landscaping but major changes would most likely not happen.

As for Sweetbay, the grocery store seems to be agreeable to Pinnacle/Ram's redesign of their façade.

"They look very encouraged," Skinner said.