

56th/Busch improvements could get county help

By Debbie Girard-Carson

Staff Writer

The city of Temple Terrace is working on funding to install pedestrian crossings and traffic islands along 56th Street and portions of Busch Blvd. Community Services Director Ralph Bosek said that the city might even be able to install a traffic light at 56th Street and Grove Hill.

Temple Terrace planners are also working with FDOT to resurface portions of 56th and Busch.

Bosek said that they are also working with a landscape architect to create a consistent streetscape along Fowler Avenue.

Temple Terrace officials are seeking the assistance of county commissioners to help turn road nightmares into things of beauty and safety.

County commissioners will hold a public hearing on Aug. 16 to discuss, among other items, allocating \$500,000 to Temple Terrace, which would help the city qualify for a matching grant from the state.

The city is currently applying for a \$1.5 million grant from the Florida Department of Transportation.

If the city receives the grant, it will have collected \$3.6 million for the entire project, leaving just under \$1 million still to find.

The funding would be used to enhance the function, safety and beauty of 56th Street and a portion of Busch Boulevard, said Community Services Director Ralph Bosek.

"It's exciting," Bosek said of finally being able to create "quality-looking" streets that will better represent what the city is about.

"Right now, it's just an ugly thoroughfare," Bosek said of 56th Street.

Temple Terrace is also working to improve Temple Heights Road.

Bosek said that the city hopes to spruce up the road between the Mercantile Bank and the former funeral home within the next 12 to 14 months. The new and improved road would serve as a prototype for future streetscapes in Temple Terrace, especially within the redevelopment area.

In order to fund the \$500,000 request, county commissioners are considering canceling their \$400,000 funding for the Temple Terrace Bypass Canal land acquisition and finding an additional \$100,000 in the Community Investment Tax Phase II account.

The land acquisition had been approved in 2001 and would have been used to establish a park.

Spurred on by the city's \$500,000 request, Commission Chairman Jim Norman asked county staff to look into what happened with another \$500,000 request the city made eight to 10 years ago.

Norman said that the commissioners allocated the half-million-dollar request for a partnership for Temple Terrace's performing arts center, Masque.

"I'd like to know what's going," Norman said of the county funds.

The county's public hearing will be held at 2 p.m. at the County Center building, 601 E. Kennedy Blvd., Tampa.