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## A look at 5 developers for downtown project

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*Staff Writer*

Five developers responded to the latest casting call by the city of Temple Terrace to modernize its downtown with shopping, retail, offices and homes.

At least three developers have roots in Florida and DeBartolo Development has North Florida Avenue offices a couple of miles away from the Temple Terrace downtown project. Three of the five development bidders are joint ventures or partnerships of several companies. Notably missing from

the list of respondents are Dallas-based giant Trammell Crow and Downtown Renaissance Alliance. Both firms had originally submitted their plans for Temple Terrace's downtown project and then withdrew.

Temple Terrace city leaders must now choose among five development firms to start again on the often-troubled downtown revitalization dream.

Who are the city's suitors?

—DeBartolo Development, of Tampa

—Pinnacle/Ram Development, of Palm

Beach Gardens, Fla.

—Vlass Group, MJ Lant Developments Inc., and Marketplace Advisors Inc. – a joint venture

—A Better Place Group, of Tampa

—Transwestern Commercial Services, of Chicago

"I'm happy," said Community Services Director Ralph Bosek, who is overseeing the downtown redevelopment project.

At three hours before the deadline Friday, Bosek said that he had two develop-

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ers' applications in hand and expected two more.

"I'm getting a little antsy," he said at the time.

By 4:45 p.m., three more proposals had come in.

Three of the developers have already shown an interest in working with Temple Terrace to create the city's downtown revitalization. DeBartolo, Pinnacle/Ram and Transwestern Commercial attended the city's pre-bid conference in late August to learn more about what the city is looking for in the project and partner.

The chosen developer faces a City Council and Mayor who have changed strategies often, city voters who rejected taxes for the project, and a council itself that may change in the November election. The anointed developer also knows that the first developer burned on the runway without any many progress for the downtown. Plus, all the uncertainties of commercial construction, which is facing tremendous cost overruns in cement, steel and other raw materials and an uncertain lending environment.

DeBartolo, especially, came as no surprise to Bosek. The Tampa developer told the Temple Terrace City Council in late July that its team would have no problem presenting its plans for the new downtown.

Both DeBartolo and the Villaggio Group, which ultimately did not submit its application, offered to step in as a replacement for Unicorp National Developments when the Orlando-based firm bowed out in July.

The Villaggio Group is a joint venture of Exceed Development and Jacoby Development.

One of the reasons DeBartolo had not been among those considered during the first round of developer selections is that the firm submitted its application a few minutes late, Bosek had told the City Council.

In an effort to beat the deadline, the firm submitted its paperwork by noon Friday, Bosek said.

DeBartolo Development, which was established in Tampa, was the creation of Edward J. DeBartolo Sr., who focused primarily on shopping malls. Former Mayor Dick Greco worked with the elder DeBartolo, who built nearby University Mall. And it was Greco who influenced the younger DeBartolo to bring his development company to Tampa, where they are located on North Florida Avenue.

The company has since evolved to include other types of large-scale commercial projects across the country in Alabama, Arizona, California, Colorado, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, New Mexico, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas and Wyoming.

A Better Place Group, another Tampa-

area based company, is currently involved in a downtown Tampa project, The Heights of Tampa, and Highland Park, near Ed Radice Park in Northwest Hillsborough.

Both projects are what the developer calls "New Urbanism," which is how Temple Terrace officials have been billing its own downtown dream.

Pinnacle/Ram Developments is a joint venture between the two firms. Ram Real Estate handles land acquisitions, manages properties and works on both commercial and residential projects. Pinnacle Housing Group handles mostly residential projects but bills itself as a "full-service real estate development company."

Vlass Group, MJ Lant Developments Inc., and Marketplace Advisors Inc., a joint venture, has been involved in various projects.

Vlass Group is working on a new town center in Altamonte Springs, Fla., as is MJ Lant Developments, a Georgia-based firm. Marketplace Advisors Inc., primarily handles retail leases.

Transwestern Commercial Services, of Chicago, is part of Transwestern Development, a full-service development company that handles development, advising tenants, agency leasing, property/facility management, and investment sales.

Notably missing from the list of respondents are Trammell Crow and Downtown Renaissance Alliance. Both firms had originally submitted their plans for Temple Terrace's downtown project and then withdrew.

They had cited concerns regarding leases, timing and financing in their letters to the city, announcing their withdrawal from the process.

When the two companies withdrew, they left city planners with just one development company with whom to negotiate - Unicorp.

When Unicorp withdrew later, members of the Temple Terrace City Council encouraged Trammell Crow and Downtown Renaissance Alliance, also known as LNR Property Corp., to re-apply.

Neither did.

The next step for the city is to distribute the five firms' applications to the selection committee for review. The committee will then score each of the applications based on various criteria and recommend a ranking.

The committee's recommendation will then be sent on to the city council for review and council members will decide who they want to interview.

Bosek said that the council could decide to interview all five firms and that the interviews could be held sometime in October.

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Michael Dunn, a police spokesman.

Pippin had been cooperating with Temple Terrace police up to one or two weeks ago when he stopped returning