

No One Wins In Defeat Of Temple Terrace Referendum

By GRANT RIMBEY Special To The Tampa Tribune

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I want to thank everyone who worked on the Temple Terrace revitalization effort for your hard work over the last four years. We created an award-winning master plan that is nationally recognized for its excellence in planning and breadth of citizen participation. In the end, the leaders of the opposition created so much confusion that most folks didn't know what they were voting for or against.

The official ballot language clearly states that the referendum bond was ``to finance or refinance acquisition, equipping and/or construction of land, parks, greenways, roads, highways and related infrastructure in the Downtown Temple Terrace Revitalization Master Plan."

Please note what is not in the ballot language: Voting for this or that developer or multiple developers. Who really started the downtown revitalization project and when. The merits of New Urbanist vs. conventional planning. The prospect of eminent domain, traffic concerns, the 18-story condo tower or the placement or displacement of yard signs. Police pensions, development on the river or project density.

Nor, for that matter, did it specify a particular master plan.

The bond referendum was simply asking whether the citizens want to fund the public infrastructure of the downtown revitalization - not all that other stuff. Even the opposition's alternative downtown plan (if there was one) would need infrastructure. But the much-awaited alternative plan - the one that, with citizen input, would create a new downtown that matches the quality of our golf course and residential areas - never did materialize.

In reviewing the comments of the leaders of the opposition, I noted plenty of concern about the project's financing, the 1 mill property tax increase, yet there have been no coherent critiques on the project's planning, size or process.

The message is loud and clear: The citizens do not want to fund the public infrastructure for the downtown revitalization. But the project must continue.

I'll leave you with a quote from Woodrow Wilson: ``I would rather lose in a cause that will someday win, than win in a cause that will someday lose."

Grant Rimbey is president of the Citizens for the Revitalization of Temple Terrace and an architect.