

## City, grocery chain end dispute

**Clashing ideas over the plans for a Sweetbay store at Bullard Parkway and 56th have been resolved.**

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TEMPLE TERRACE - Just weeks after denouncing Kash n' Karry/Sweetbay Supermarkets as an unyielding roadblock in the redevelopment of Temple Terrace, city officials gave the company a standing ovation Wednesday night, finding the presentation architecturally agreeable.

The new plan, the second within a month, pleased city officials so much that they extended an olive branch also to the developer, Unicorp National Developments of Orlando. During the council's May 16 meeting a council member filed a motion to halt the city's relationship with the company.

"I am very, very happy," Mayor Joe Affronti said. "It's a team effort and this proves that if you want to do something, you just work together to find a solution."

The new solution, embraced eagerly by supporters and perceived by opponents as lacking financial foresight, marked the fifth anniversary of a project that began as a small communal idea to revamp the depressed corner of 56<sup>th</sup> Street and Bullard Parkway. So far the city has spent about \$22-million on land and owns a bit more than 35 acres of the 38-acre quadrant.

The past month, with its arguing and finger-pointing, has not been unusual.

The supermarket controversy came after an architectural plan presented at a City Council meeting a month ago drastically steered away from the New Urbanism concept of high-density development that the city had pledged for the land. Instead, it placed a parking lot next to 56<sup>th</sup> Street and in front of the new Sweetbay, which is renting more than 42 percent of the plaza space through 2044.

Residents blamed city officials for not doing due diligence when acquiring the land with the supermarket in 2003. Council member Frank Chillura filed a motion to break the city's relationship with Unicorp for not delivering the promised product.

Other council members proposed forgoing any discussion with Sweetbay and building around the existing supermarket or attracting other grocers to the development.

Officials at the supermarket chain, which is converting all 108 Kash n' Karry stores in Florida into Sweetbays, said they had never been invited to any City Council or public meeting to voice their opinion or to listen to the community.

"We would have liked to have been involved," said Nicole LeBeau, a representative for the chain.

The job of bringing the two sides together fell to Ralph Bosek, the city's redevelopment director.

"I believe that once they (Sweetbay) began to understand what our community wants, they realized how strongly the community feels about the master plan," he said.

The master plan refers to an architectural blueprint commissioned by the city in 2004 for \$285,000 from Torti Gallas and Partners, a Maryland firm. A grocery store was included in it, but multistory and multipurpose buildings enclosed it and its parking lot.

What Sweetbay proposed Wednesday to the city and the 70 or so residents who came to listen was similar in spirit: a store in a courtyard, without a street view of 56<sup>th</sup> Street, but with more parking spaces than in the initial master plan. The store would move north, giving up its current lease for a new one.

"I was extremely pleased with what they came back with," said Ron Govin, a council member. "In a very short time they were able to come up with a model which fits New Urbanism much better."

The presentation also surprised Grant Rimbey, president of Citizens for Revitalization and an architect.

"I'm going to be guardedly optimistic," Rimbey said. "I think it's going in the right direction, but I'm going to be skeptical until we actually get it built."

Some were more skeptical.

"What has changed?" asked Morris Rendahl, a Temple Terrace resident of 25 years. "Now what do we have? A grocery store that cuts its beef separately and is the anchor tenant. What did we have before? The very same thing."

The city approved the plan, Affronti said, because Sweetbay showed that it was able to revise its plans to meet the needs of the city.

LeBeau said her company was pleased with the reception it received. But, she emphasized, the plans are very preliminary.

City officials hope the details, including finances, will be worked out within the next couple of months.

Bosek is asking the council to approve Tuesday a set of conditions for Unicorp before any partnership is signed. The conditions call for the developer to complete lease negotiations with Kash n' Karry/Sweetbay by Aug. 6, among other things.

"There is a possibility there could be some additional cost with it, but we are really committed," Govin said.

That price could be high, said Ken Tozier, an opponent of the New Urbanism concept for the redevelopment. Tozier successfully agitated in last year's referendum against the 1-mill property tax increase that would have raised \$20-million in bonds for the city. He believes that the term and length of the lease give the supermarket chain too much power in the negotiating process.

"What is really sad is that all these happy people from (Wednesday) will soon be very angry and very disappointed people," he said.