

Temple Terrace moves forward with downtown plan

[Michael Hinman](#)

In a unanimous vote, the Temple Terrace City Council gave its stamp of approval to the initial plans of the first phase of a downtown redevelopment plan created by [Unicorp National Developments Inc.](#) The new plan came on the heels of an August referendum defeat that would have pushed \$20 million from an ad valorem tax revenue into the original \$330 million project. The new plan, which will include 132,000 square feet of commercial space as well as 275 residential units in an area now occupied by a blighted shopping center, will cover nearly half of the 38 acres of land the city owns on the corner of 56th Street and Bullard Parkway.

With the approval, Unicorp officials said they can continue negotiations with Kash n' Karry about locating a Sweetbay store as part of the first phase.

Kash n' Karry officials apparently were waiting for the council to give its initial approval to the Unicorp plan before having serious discussions with the company, said Austin Simmons, vice president of retail development for Unicorp.

After the referendum defeat, council members listed of 21 items to address regarding the project. They split the downtown redevelopment into two pieces, eliminated a proposed 18-story tower on the Hillsborough River and removed much of the infrastructure improvements that would have come from the \$20 million boost from residents.

"All of my questions, all of my complaints, all of my concerns, have been answered tonight," said Councilman Ken Halloway, following Unicorp's presentation in front of an audience of more than 100 people. "It's time that we move forward."

The new plan lacks many specifics that had been in the original plan, including a price tag. However, Unicorp officials said they would be putting together all the details in the coming months.

As part of the deal, Unicorp will develop the first phase while purchasing property for the second phase, which will include land for a proposed City Hall and a cultural arts center.

Unicorp will allocate portions of the land it is purchasing for the civic buildings, Simmons said after the meeting. It will, however, be asked to submit site plans before moving forward with any second phase work.

The project has been the source of heated debate among residents, ranging from those who want to see a complete redevelopment of Temple Terrace's southeast area to those who want city officials to sell the multi-million-dollar land to private developers.

Even with a lighter residential density than previously planned, traffic on some of the smaller streets will get out of control, said Ken Tozier, owner of [International Computer Works Inc.](#) in Temple Terrace. Tozier made his opposition part of a failed mayoral bid earlier this year.

Grant Rimbey, a local architect who has been a strong proponent of the plan, threw his support behind Unicorp's design.

"Most cities don't hire computer guys to do their planning," Rimbey said regarding Tozier's opposition to the project. "We shouldn't either."

Some residents had called for a high-profile architect to join the project with Unicorp, and the Orlando-based company said it would bring in renowned mixed-use architect David Kitchens, principal-in-charge of Cooper Carry in Alexandria, Va. Kitchens' projects include Mizner Park in Boca Raton, which won an Excellence in Design award from the [American Institute of Architects](#).

Community Development Director Ralph Bosek said the city is still looking for sources of funding, but told the Tampa Bay Business Journal earlier in the week that it was expecting up to \$13.6 million from Hillsborough County's Community Development Block Grant program, as well as revenues received from current tenants of Terrace Plaza and Kash n' Karry Plaza onsite and future tenant rents in the project.