

Unicorp dropped from Temple Terrace redevelopment

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by [Michael Hinman](#)

Temple Terrace city officials severed ties with Orlando-based **Unicorp National Developments** Monday after company officials said they would not be able to meet an Aug. 6 deadline to finalize a deal with **Sweetbay Supermarkets**.

Sweetbay, a division of Belgium-based **Delhaize Group** (NYSE: DEG), is a major tenant in the downtown redevelopment area, which encompasses nearly 38 acres near the intersection of North 56th Street and Bullard Parkway. Sweetbay officials had talked about moving their store a block north as part of the redevelopment plan but were not able to work out a financial deal with Unicorp in time to meet a city-imposed deadline.

City officials are going back to the drawing board, sending out a request for qualifications to developers interested in taking over the mixed-use, New Urban project, which could take up to three months.

Ralph Bosek, the city's community services director, told the city council Monday night that a new developer could be installed by the beginning of August if officials simply chose from two firms -- DeBartolo Group and Villagio -- that took part in the developer selection process in 2003. Council members, who have been in this process for more than six years as a body, said that while they want to get the project moving, it was better not to rush.

"What is a few months to something that we'll be married to for years to come?" asked Councilman Frank Chillura.

Unicorp withdrew from the project last week but then quickly changed its position when it requested another 60 days. The council, which had set the Aug. 6 hard date, did not even consider the request and voted unanimously to accept Unicorp's original withdrawal. Unicorp officials did not speak at the meeting.

Under the new request for qualifications, firms will be able to submit their qualifications and financial wherewithal to complete the project that has been estimated to be in the \$300 million range through Unicorp, as well as DeBartolo and Villagio.

Councilman Ron Govin asked that the city be allowed to negotiate with Sweetbay about its lease so that it could be brought to the table with a new developer, but the council rejected that on Bosek's recommendation.

"The agreement will be between Sweetbay and the developer, not the city," Bosek said.
"Negotiating a long-term lease is a financial arrangement. If I was a developer, I wouldn't want a city negotiating my financial future."