

Temple Terrace may sit on redevelopment land until market recovers

Tampa Bay Business Journal - by [Michael Hinman](#) Staff Writer

Ram Development Corp. and the former **Pinnacle Realty Advisors** may feel they still could be a part of Temple Terrace's downtown redevelopment team, but as far as the city council is concerned, it's time to move along.

The council, meeting as the Community Redevelopment Agency, decided Friday to explore options beyond the Ram/Pinnacle team – options that could include sitting on some 38 acres of land south of the North 56th Street and Busch Boulevard intersection for the next three years waiting for the market to rebound.

"I don't want the city to be a victim of opportunity," said Councilman Frank Chillura, himself a developer who recently opened Terrace Piazza on 56th Street. "I want to see something happen [in the redevelopment], but you have to draw a line and say enough is enough. I don't want to fire sell the property and hand all these benefits out."

Ram Development sent a letter to city officials Tuesday evening asking to have its purchase agreement of part of the shopping center property be terminated, and to have an immediate refund of its \$400,000 escrow deposit. However, Bob Skinner, senior vice president of development for Ram, told the ***Tampa Bay Business Journal*** Wednesday that just because they **asked out of the contract** doesn't mean they want to go away.

"We did this termination to protect our deposit," Skinner said. "It's an amendment to an agreement. Nothing happens overnight."

Going from here

No one from the Ram/Pinnacle team was present at Friday morning's meeting, but council members said they lost faith in the development team when they seemed to balk over a \$75,000 penalty if they were to cancel the project after the initial \$14.9 million sale was finalized.

"I think that \$75,000 on a \$15 million deal is extremely reasonable," said Chillura, who added if the city moved forward with the deal they would suffer a \$6 million loss.

Councilman Ron Govin, who has been acting as a liaison between the development negotiations and the city council, said he felt Ram/Pinnacle should be given another chance, and that there was still a chance to keep the developers on the project.

"Each one of us reads the newspaper and understands that, economically, we are challenged right now," Govin said. "I'm disappointed that the time frame is having to be altered and

that we're having to push back. But ... we certainly are not the only project that is being pushed back. I think if we stepped out of this project completely at this point, we are going to have a very difficult time getting back into it."

Mayor Joe Affronti cited that the price Ram/Pinnacle was paying for the first 20.4 acres, \$14.9 million, may be lower than what the city paid, but it's actually ahead of the assessed value of the land, which stands at \$12 million, according to the city's accounting office.

"We either start from scratch again and do whatever we can in the redevelopment area, or we try to sell it, and if we did that we would be going against everybody in our community," Affronti said.

City Manager Kim Leinbach said he would work with the city's staff to develop some options and bring them back to the table. Those options could include beginning a third search for a developer or waiting for the market to rebound.

Leinbach also said he would explore the possibility of asking the Hillsborough County Commission to either extend or even postpone revenue streams from a tax incremental finance plan set up in 2003 to help finance the overall project, that at the time was said to be as high as \$300 million. Ram/Pinnacle's project, however, was valued at less than \$50 million until it was canceled earlier this week.