

Temple Terrace Has Been Asleep At The Wheel

Our elected officials, city leaders, developer team and citizens have finally delivered an acceptable downtown redevelopment plan, and I'm thankful for it.

However, another area that awaits our revitalization energies is our city's image.

The neighborhood of my architecture office in historic Hyde Park has so many former Temple Terrace residents that it's practically our sister city. The perception of some ex-patriots regarding today's Temple Terrace is telling: "the city is going down the drain"; "unfortunately, the downtown redevelopment is a flop"; "the current citizens are cheap, miserly and dumb for not supporting the measly \$1 million tax referendum for the redevelopment"; and "anyone that can afford to move here from Temple Terrace has already done so."

Of course, we know much of this is nonsense.

Whether we recognize it or not, our city is indeed in competition with South

Tampa, Carrollwood, Brandon, Plant City and even (gulp) New Tampa to attract the area's best and the brightest.

We all know that Temple Terrace has the finest assets and potential of any community in the area – the river, golf course, trees, historic town plan and architecture, dedicated and educated community, great location, and soon, a redeveloped downtown worthy of our community. Somehow, the word is not getting out to potential home buyers in the region about who and what we are as a community, and what Temple Terrace has to offer.

For too long we've been asleep at the wheel, resting on our 1920s planning laurels and not protecting our image. For too long, we have allowed some local press to use our city for their own sensationalistic goals, often highlighting troubling news and events in "suitcase city" or other blighted locales outside of our city limits and labeling it "in the Temple Terrace area."

Meanwhile, the Northeast Section of The Tampa Tribune news is circulated only in our immediate area. Thus, our city's many visionary initiatives are largely preached to the choir, whereas rejuvenation initiatives in neighboring Tampa (which generally pale in comparison to ours) grace the pages of The Tribune's Metro section for everyone, everywhere, to see. No wonder South Tampa doesn't have a clue about us.

How much longer will we permit this information fishbowl to persist?

We as a city no longer have the leisure of lazily "navel gazing" as we've done for so long. Venerable islands unto themselves such as the Temple Terrace Golf and Country Club and Florida College must realize that they're an integral and valued part of our community and that creative, enlightening dialogue is a two-sided effort, and at least for the club, its future alacrity depends on a sea change in attitude.

Many pine for the old days when Temple Terrace had 15,000 people, Bullard Parkway was two lanes, we weren't surrounded by Tampa's blight and crime, you could see the stars at night and it was quiet (except for Golden Gate Speedway in the distance). Those days are gone forever.

We can't re-create our past, but we can build on those good bones and create something different, maybe even (dare I say) better than what we had before. To achieve this better Temple Terrace, common sense tells us that we can't continue doing things the same old way, manipulated by the same old people. Whether we like it or not, Temple Terrace is growing up. Let's be smart and consciously decide what exactly that future Temple Terrace will be.

Grant Rimbey
Temple Terrace

The writer is president of the Citizens for the Revitalization of Temple Terrace.