

Partnership Picked To Develop Town Center

PINNACLE TEAM HAS LOCAL CONNECTIONS

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TEMPLE TERRACE - A joint venture with strong local ties and extensive retail, office and housing development experience was selected Thursday as master developer of Temple Terrace's mixed-use town center.

The partnership - Pinnacle Realty Advisors, Tampa; South Florida's Ram Development; and Atlanta-based architectural firm Cooper Carry - was the favorite of not only the city council, but the mayor, the Redevelopment Task Force and the few residents who spoke at the two-hour special meeting at the Omar K. Lightfoot Recreation Center.

Pinnacle managing partner Skipper Peek called the partnership "a world-class team with the willingness and flexibility" to work with the city.

The project is a 35-acre, New Urbanism-style development southeast of 56th Street and Bullard Parkway with retail, residential, office, restaurant and cultural/civic components.

Thursday's selection, based on presentations by four developers, was necessary because the city's previous developer withdrew in July.

"I just feel very strongly they are the best," Councilman Ron Govin said in making the motion to select the Pinnacle team, which "amassed the best local team," provided a detailed project timeline and "exceptional references."

The Pinnacle team proposes including high-density housing in the initial phase of the project.

Public meetings are not ideal for discussing site plan specifics, said Peek, who repeatedly stressed that he values discussions with individual council members and community leaders before presenting the plan, due in 60 days.

A key element of the plan, however, is a grid including a main street separating a grocery store and its parking lot. Pocket parks would soften entrances from Bullard and 56th. A new city hall and community center would come in future phases.

Peek, a Tampa Palms resident, said he is "one of the most experienced real estate people in this area." His career includes the position of vice president of Florida development for Highwoods Properties during the time it built New Tampa's Highwoods Preserve.

Until late 2005, he worked for DeBartolo, a developer passed over Thursday. The others were a partnership including The Vlass Group,

Atlanta, and a joint venture that included Transwestern Commercial Services, Chicago.

Vlass was ranked first and Pinnacle second by the city staff's selection committee that included Community Services Director Ralph Bosek.

"My job is to do the best I can in evaluating everything," Bosek said after the vote. All four had strong financial histories and excellent references, he said. "Those top two firms are both very qualified. It's a good day for Temple Terrace."

The vote for Pinnacle was 4-1. Glenda Venable said later she voted no because she favored Vlass.

"The heavy lifting begins now," Peek said after the selection. Meeting the deadline for the detailed site plan will not be a problem, he said.

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