

Gas Station Demolition Symbolic

REDEVELOPMENT KICKS OFF

By GEORGE WILKENS
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TEMPLE TERRACE — Downtown redevelopment began Wednesday — at least symbolically — as sledgehammer-wielding city officials initiated demolition of a long-vacant gasoline station.

One by one, the mayor and council members chipped away at the former Chevron Food Mart, 8709 N. 56th St., a corner property the city bought more than a year ago as part of its redevelopment plan.

The ceremony attended by about 50 residents represented a "symbolic, ceremonial and practical start" to redevelopment, said City Manager Kim Leinbach.

The city intends to create a 35-acre, New Urbanism-style development southeast of 56th Street and Bullard Parkway, a site to include retail, residential, office, restaurant and cultural/civic components.

Mayor Joe Affronti led the 3 p.m. attack on the northwest corner of the building, knocking off a couple of chunks of the faux-brick façade, prompting applause.

Equipment began demolition Thursday. The contractor, TBE Group, has scheduled three days for demolition and cleanup.

Skipper Peek, of Pinnacle Realty Advisors, the Tampa component of a partnership selected Oct. 12 to lead redevelopment, said he has met individually with four of the five council members to detail the plan. "We're very confident we have a plan that's grounded in reality," he said.

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