

## COUNCIL PANS ONE PRESENTATION

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The Tampa Tribune  
October 7, 2006

TEMPLE TERRACE - After watching presentations from four development teams hoping to take over the city's redevelopment program, city council members don't have a clear favorite.

But they know who they won't be choosing Thursday. The council universally panned the presentation by Tampa-based DeBartolo Development, calling it "another strip mall."

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. The presentations became necessary when the city's previous developer dropped out of the project in July.

Bill Rain, director of development for DeBartolo, said the company wanted to keep 80 percent of the existing buildings and give them a Mediterranean facelift. They would add a bookstore on Bullard and several restaurants on 56th Street, but the plan did not include housing or parks.

"When I read this plan, I was totally disappointed and angry," Councilwoman Glenda Venable said.

Two strong contenders are the Atlanta-based team of Michael Vlass and Michael Lant and South Florida's Ram Development, which teamed up with Tampa's Pinnacle Realty.

Lant said he's committed to urban and suburban infill development, particularly suburban grayfields, or "dead shopping centers."

"We have looked at this project from afar for a year or so," Lant said.

They are developing a 25-acre town center project in Altamonte Springs that had many of the same problems inherent with the Temple Terrace site, such as existing tenants with long-term leases. Vlass detailed how he overcame those conflicts and said his team would present plans within 60 days with the grocery store in its current location and also at a different site.

"They are one cog in this wheel," he said. "The world doesn't revolve around Sweetbay."

They recommend a mix of apartments and condominiums built around parking garages similar to the housing in Uptown Altamonte. "If anything, I think your plan is not dense enough," Vlass said.

The Ram-Pinnacle team also proposed housing in the first phase of the project. "We believe that a high-quality, courtyard town house project

on the river will be viable in the near future," said Skipper Peek, managing partner of Pinnacle.

A key element in the Ram proposal is creation of a street grid on the 35-acre site including a main street between the grocery store and its parking lot. Pocket parks would soften the entrances from Bullard and 56th. A new city hall and community center would be included in later phases.

Also presenting Wednesday was Riverhills Temple Terrace, a consortium headed by local developer Gregory Hughes and Chicago-based Transwestern. One valuable team member is Torti Gallas, the planning firm that developed the city's master plan.

Hughes, a Tampa resident for 10 years, stressed his local ties to the area. But his track record is less than sterling. Hughes filed for bankruptcy protection after plans to build two 28-story office and condo towers in downtown Tampa fell apart.

"We're aware of those issues," Redevelopment Director Ralph Bosek said. "He has some good partners on that team. Transwestern is on very sound financial ground."

They proposed building the new city hall atop the existing Sweetbay store.

The presentations will be broadcast on the city's cable station at 5 p.m. Sunday.

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