

Council Faces Change Tuesday

By GEORGE WILKENS The Tampa Tribune

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TEMPLE TERRACE - The players will change Tuesday night, when winners of the Temple Terrace City Council race are sworn in for four-year terms.

The new team, however, will remain focused on downtown redevelopment, predicts Ken Halloway, the only incumbent returned to office in last week's six-way race for three seats.

"I'm confident our progress in the city will continue in terms of the redevelopment," said Halloway, 73, who begins his second term with Tuesday's administering of the oath of office.

"I don't think the dynamics of the council are going to change," other than new members posing many questions and offering different approaches, which can extend debate, Halloway said.

"But, by and large, I do believe we'll all work together and we're going to make things happen," said Halloway, a retired Army colonel.

Joining the council Tuesday will be Mark Knapp and Alison Fernandez.

Knapp, 40, has served two terms on the five-member council, from 1994 to 2002.

Fernandez, president of the Temple Terrace Jr. Woman's Club and a newcomer to politics, finished first in the nonpartisan, citywide race, garnering 4,094 votes, or 22.38 percent of the total 18,297 cast (electors were asked to vote for three of the six candidates). Knapp received 20.17 percent of the votes; Halloway received 17.71 percent.

Reflecting on her strong finish, Fernandez, 38, said she thinks she offered a compromise to voters who favor downtown redevelopment --and to those who do not.

"I think they recognized that I want to hear what they have to say," Fernandez said of voters, based on comments received during her campaign.

"I want to hear their opinions, even if they think I disagree with it. If they tell me they're for something or against it, I want to hear why that is because I think that's how compromise is reached.

"I do want to see redevelopment done on that corner [56th Street and Bullard Parkway]; it is an eyesore. It just reflects on our city as a whole, for people who are unfamiliar with our city."

It is essential that the redevelopment project is market-driven, she said.

"I want to see what's built is appropriate for the space. I want to see a development that makes sense for our demographics," said Fernandez, a former auditor with a degree in accounting and finance.

Fernandez said comments about redevelopment - pro and con - abounded during her campaign for council.

"People who are for it, they just want to get it moving. People who are against it, they have their reasons and their concerns, but it just comes down to it's a lot of money," she said.

The Pinnacle/Ram partnership the council selected four weeks before the election proposed "the most practical" redevelopment plan and was the best choice among the three firms, Fernandez said.

"I think they have a good feel for the businesses that would go in there, the restaurants, that sort of thing," said Fernandez, who met with Pinnacle managing partner Skipper Peek after the firm was selected to develop the master plan for revitalizing the city's urban core. "I think they really know the city and the demographics here. I think that's important."

Knapp, who could not be reached for comment for this story, is a general contractor and developer.

He has said his decision to again run for council stems from his belief that the city needs a "business-oriented, logical-thinking" individual with council experience.

At an Oct. 10 forum, Knapp said the city must "get out of the leasing business" and end its role as a landlord. The city owns \$20 million worth of property in the redevelopment district.

Knapp also said redevelopment - the most ambitious project in city history - cannot be accomplished without an increase in taxes.

Halloway, Fernandez and Knapp will be sworn in following a brief 7 p.m. Tuesday council meeting.