

Council OKs Rejuvenation Strategy

By JOYCE McKENZIE, The Tampa Tribune

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TEMPLE TERRACE - After months of struggling in the red zone, the city finally has scored.

On Tuesday, the Temple Terrace City Council approved what it considers a winning strategy to rejuvenate 17.5 acres of the city's blighted downtown business district southeast of 56th Street and Bullard Parkway.

The council voted to accept developer Ram/Pinnacle's plan to transform the area into a New Urbanism-style project including residential, office, commercial and civic elements, including a 20,144-square-foot arts education center.

Ram/Pinnacle will purchase the city-owned property for \$15.4 million. In turn, the city will pay the developer a \$1.2 million market adjustment fee, a charge Ram/Pinnacle contends is needed to compensate for the downturn in retail market conditions.

"It was a lot of hard work trying to get everyone at a comfort level," said Councilman Ron Govin, who represents the council in negotiations between the city staff and the developer. "City staff has been unrelenting in trying to find a solution to this."

Mike Harmon, Ram Development's chief development officer, said his team also has put in many hours on the project.

"We have the bones of what could be the cornerstone of Temple Terrace," he said.

State Rep. Ed Homan, R-Tampa, who remembered talking about the redevelopment issue six years ago when he first ran for office, was pleased with the council's decision to move the project forward.

"The state would like to help this city, but the state wants the city to help itself first," Homan said.

Former Temple Terrace Mayor George Fee called the plan a winner, and fellow resident and architect James Rule said it should greatly improve the city's overall quality of life.

The development agreement is expected to be signed by April 1, and the closing date on the property sale is slated for July 1.