

## Time, Money Key To Street Project



Temple Terrace Redevelopment Director Ralph Bosek outlines the high points of his city's redevelopment plans.

BRUCE HOSKING / Tampa Tribune File Photo

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TEMPLE TERRACE - The city's quest to make 56th Street safer as part of an urban redevelopment plan hinges on finances.

As Temple Terrace's plans to revitalize the areas east of 56th Street and south of Bullard Parkway to the Hillsborough River move forward, the need to make the area more pedestrian-friendly becomes greater, city leaders say.

"We want to make 56th Street into a pedestrian-friendly street, calm the traffic and increase the use of multimodal means of transportation, primarily pedestrian and bicycle, in addition to the use of automobiles," said Community Services Director Ralph Bosek.

Among the items on the city's legislative wish list for 2006 are two transportation requests to change the face of 56th Street, Bosek said. The city has asked state Rep. Ed Homan, R-Temple Terrace, and state Sen. Victor Crist, R-Tampa, to help secure \$1.5 million to partially fund an enhancement project and another \$750,000 to move utility lines underground along the street.

At a recent city council meeting, Homan told city officials that 2006 may hold Temple Terrace's best chance for getting state money, considering that local lawmakers, including Senate President Sen. Tom Lee, R-Brandon, are in powerful positions.

"I have provided the [Florida Department of Transportation] with a preliminary cost estimate of \$3.5 million, plus a 10 percent contingency for a reduced-scope project, to improve 56th Street from the Hillsborough River to Temple Heights Road," Bosek said. "I have eliminated turn lanes and other expensive features of the project and focused on beautification and pedestrian safety."

The city recently was awarded \$2 million in federal money for the 56th Street project, Bosek said. The problem is, \$1.5 million more is needed to make the project happen.

If the funding requests aren't granted, the city may have to wait until 2010 to get started, and then there is no guarantee, Bosek said. That is the year the Hillsborough County Metropolitan Planning Organization, or MPO, has recommended the projects be funded through a \$1.5 million state transportation allocation. However, the project is fourth on the organization's priority list, and considering the MPO's annual allocation from the state Department of Transportation averages about \$2 million, there may not be enough money.

Another option the city is pursuing comes from the recent funding of an improvement project to repave and beautify Busch Boulevard in Tampa, Bosek said. The city hopes some of the MPO and Department of Transportation money allocated there also can improve Busch Boulevard from Overlook Drive to 56th Street.

To keep these projects on track and help develop new ones, the city is negotiating a contract with transportation consultant firm Volkert & Associates in Tampa. The city council approved beginning the negotiations in a Dec. 20 meeting. A contract fee has not been released.

State transportation officials have been working with Temple Terrace to help streamline an initial \$10 million request for improvements on 56th Street, said Bob Clifford, DOT district planning manager. The request needed more specifics and to be broken into more realistic annual funding requests.

"What we suggested to Temple Terrace when we met with them recently was, 'Now that you have it on the MPO list, your project could be defined a little better.' So, then we can look to find ways to fund it," Clifford said. "They have given us some preliminary numbers. They have some concepts such as landscaping the median of the roadway, and that's allowed, but we need to understand a little bit more of the specifics. At this point, it's been nothing more than concepts."

Once the concepts give way to specifics, Clifford said, the department can help facilitate ways to fund it.

"We are anticipating after the first of the year having the specifics and another meeting, but we are ready to talk any time," he said. "We can clearly say the enhancements can be funded through one pot of money. It just depends on what else they want to do. There are some other pots of money out there."