

City Guidelines To Pave Way For New Old-Time Look



Homes such as this one near the intersection of Bullard Parkway and Burlingame Avenue embody the characteristics that could be required of new homes built in Temple Terrace's community redevelopment area.

By CANDACE C. MUNDY / The Tampa Tribune

By CANDACE J. SAMOLINSKI csamolinski@tampatrib.com

Published: Feb 4, 2006

TEMPLE TERRACE - Property owners in a 225-acre tract along 56th Street have about two months to make their voices heard on building codes that would restrict development and renovations.

Temple Terrace city leaders are crafting design guidelines intended to shape the aesthetics of new commercial buildings and residential dwellings in the community redevelopment area. The city also is considering financial incentives to encourage existing property owners to make improvements to reflect the envisioned Mediterranean-style architecture.

It's a critical time for residents and business owners who may see their property values rise or fall depending upon how the guidelines are shaped, said Bill Spikowski, of Spikowski Planning Associates, a consulting firm that helped the city of Fort Myers Beach undergo a similar transformation in its design code.

"A city can be as pushy as its residents want it to be," he said. "You have to decide what's fair and what's not in terms of requirements."

The guidelines to be voted on by the city council in April will pave the way for an overhaul of the city's building code in the redevelopment area. Those changes eventually could extend to all of Temple Terrace.

The modifications are intended to promote an urban environment of buildings whose architecture can withstand the test of time and can be adapted for new uses as economic conditions dictate.

"We didn't want to put a moratorium in place on projects for the 1 1/2 years it will take us to rewrite the code," said Ralph Bosek, the city's redevelopment director. "If we put these interim guidelines in place, it will allow us to have intelligent development in the meantime."

What Temple Terrace is attempting to do is an example of a nationwide movement to make timeless downtowns and neighborhoods reminiscent of those built prior to the emergence of strip malls and suburban communities.

"If you think about a cool Main Street, most likely you think about a place with interesting buildings that have a certain feel and have existed for many years, but the insides have changed many times," said Geoffrey Ferrell, of the consulting firm Ferrell Madden Associates in Washington. "It's more about regulating the face of the building than it is its use and protecting neighborhoods by shaping what's around them."

The changes in Temple Terrace's design codes could mean a spike in property values because the density allowed likely will increase, said City Manager Kim Leinbach. For homeowners, it could be a matter of being allowed to build a larger home on the same lot or constructing an apartment building where it once wasn't allowed.

Not everyone agrees the changes are a good idea. Resident and businessman Ken Tozier, who owns property in the redevelopment area, recently spoke at a city council meeting at which he expressed fears about financial hardships that could accompany the design requirements.

"What happens if a building or a house is destroyed by a hurricane or a fire and the owner has to rebuild?" he said.

If a home or business is destroyed by any means or demolished to make room for a newer structure, the new design rules would apply, Leinbach said. There would be an appeals process, but the criteria have not been set.

What is clear is that anything built in the CRA in the coming years would look much different from what's in place today.

"Within the Mediterranean style, there are 100 different variations," Bosek said. "We don't want it to all look the same, but we do want a theme."

The proposed guidelines call for homes and businesses to have stucco facades painted in Mediterranean colors and clay tile roofs. Businesses would have parking in the rear, large windows at street level and wider sidewalks to encourage people to walk to shops from their homes rather than driving. Some businesses would have residential units on the top floors.

"To me, it means if you own a building that is old and dilapidated with tenants you don't necessarily want, it's an opportunity to redevelop," Bosek said.

The biggest changes could come in the west side of the redevelopment area, which includes the residential streets of Overlook Drive, Beverly Road and Grove Hill Road. Those streets are lined with modest 1950s ranch-style homes constructed of concrete block with asphalt-shingle roofs. Near the intersection of 56th Street and Busch Boulevard are aging office buildings, restaurants and strip malls that city officials and residents say are in need of a facelift.

Return To Its Roots

That's what residents had in mind when they met with city leaders as long as four years ago to discuss their vision of the city's future. There was a push by a core group of residents for the city to return to its architectural roots.

Homes near the Temple Terrace Golf Course that date to 1926 exemplify those roots. They were built for the city's first residents, who arrived after incorporation a year earlier. Whether grand or modest, those houses embody the Mediterranean and Spanish architecture that was the founders' vision.

Re-creating that style in new structures and establishing a pedestrian-friendly business environment along busy 56th Street is the goal behind the design guidelines, Bosek said.

"I truly think we are on the right track here," he said. "Nothing is set in stone, though, and we do want to hear from residents.

"We have sent letters to all property owners in the CRA alerting them of these changes and plan to do so again. We are willing to meet with anyone who has questions. All they have to do is ask."

For information, call the city manager's office at (813) 989-7105.