

Unicorp Offers Another Design

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TEMPLE TERRACE - When a bond referendum failed in August, Temple Terrace city leaders feared the most difficult thing about making downtown redevelopment a reality would be paying for it.

It's become increasingly clear the project's design is its Achilles' heel, city leaders and interested developer, Unicorp National Developments of Orlando, said Thursday. On Wednesday, city leaders were presented with another design plan that, if approved, could move the project forward.

The trouble lies in trying to incorporate existing tenants, which rely heavily on vehicular traffic, into a New Urbanism model centered on encouraging pedestrians and bicyclists. There also are existing buildings that do not embody Mediterranean styles residents told city leaders they wanted.

"I thought, with the selection of the developer, the hard part was going to be the financing," said Community Services Director Ralph Bosek.

City and Unicorp officials have spent months in exhaustive negotiations with Kash n' Karry/Sweetbay Supermarkets on a site plan for a store in the redevelopment area. The area stretches from 56th Street and Bullard Parkway south to the Hillsborough River. The current store holds a 17-year lease, with the opportunity for renewals into 2043.

Unicorp submitted a plan Wednesday to the city that incorporates 95 percent of Sweetbay's requests, said Lee J. Maher, Unicorp's co-owner. It is awaiting approval from the city and supermarket officials.

"They wanted a concrete field in front for parking," he said. "What this gives them is customer parking in the front and a pedestrian-friendly area that we would create with landscaping and two fountains and a walkway."

The store's location also would shift, Maher said. The store would be built behind the existing Burger King, near the closed Publix location that would be demolished.

"We're trying to work out a deal where we can do some remodeling on the Burger King and put a frontage road there," Maher said. "We would have a new Regions Bank and a new post office."

Grouping businesses that rely on vehicular traffic is being considered, City Manager Kim Leinbach said. Burger King officials have said the restaurant generates 67 percent of its business in the drive-through.

Leinbach said he met individually with city council members to discuss Unicorp's latest proposal. However, the council has not discussed the proposal as a group and may not do so for two weeks, Leinbach said.

It's just a concept at this point, Leinbach and Bosek said Thursday.

Once that concept becomes an approved plan, a cost analysis will be done to determine the price tag.

Bosek said, the city is looking at ways of incorporating tenants - Advance Auto Parts, for example - that sit in a mostly residential area into the redevelopment area earlier to avoid problems with building housing in the project's second phase.

Another consideration is keeping existing buildings, Bosek said. For example, the Masque Community Theatre operates in a building that is valued at roughly \$3 million. It might be cost-effective to make improvements instead of constructing a new cultural arts center.