

Changes Sought Might Delay Temple Terrace Project

JOYCE McKENZIE

The Tampa Tribune

Published: June 13, 2008

TEMPLE TERRACE - Revitalization of Temple Terrace's downtown core could be delayed by its redevelopment partners' request to make changes to the site plan.

Ram Development Co. and Pinnacle Realty Advisors have requested several changes to the plan, complicating the city's efforts to rezone property in the redevelopment area and move ahead with efforts to transform the blighted area east of 56th Street and south of Bullard Parkway into a mix of retail, residential, office, restaurant and civic/cultural components.

When Charles Stephenson, the city's community development director, left the council meeting June 3, he thought he was equipped to address the issues and concerns that might occur during the council's continuation of a public hearing Tuesday on the proposed rezoning 20.7 acres.

The city council's authorization of the new zoning status goes hand in hand with its approval of the project's site plan.

However, in a surprise move June 5, Ram/Pinnacle requested a series of modifications to the site plan, issues that most likely will delay the projected closing scheduled for July 1.

"I feel like I'm aiming at a moving target," Stephenson said. "New things are added every time we look at their revised site plan. It's makes for a difficult task."

The new list of developer requests includes several waivers to the Temple Terrace Downtown Community Redevelopment Overlay Zoning District set forth by council members in January 2005.

Among Pinnacle/Ram's requests is the right to expand the 15,456 square feet of free-standing restaurant uses 10 percent; more leeway in the improvements required to the back of buildings that front residential property; and explicit definitions of the project's easement requirements. In addition, the developer is asking for flexibility in interpreting the city's guidelines relating to the project's colors, signage, lighting, landscaping and tree removal, issues within the redevelopment site plan subject to the council's approval.

"We're trying to look to see if these requests comply with code," Stephenson said.

At the suggestion of Councilman Ron Govin, the council opted to allow the city staff and Ram/Pinnacle two additional weeks to research and discuss each side's concerns.

"That would probably push the time lines back to perhaps late August," said Govin, who also acts as the council's representative in redevelopment discussions with Ram/Pinnacle.

Planning consultant Erica Kubia, on hand to represent Bob Skinner of Ram Development, and Skipper Peek of Pinnacle Advisors, agreed Tuesday to extend site plan negotiations.

"We're very committed to this project," Kubia said.

The public hearing will continue at 8 a.m. June 25 in the council chambers at Temple Terrace City Hall.