

Planners Promote Concepts For City

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TEMPLE TERRACE - The proposed Temple Terrace revitalization will succeed because it incorporates elements that draw people downtown, planners and developers assured residents Friday night.

More than 200 residents attended Unicorp National Developments' 7 p.m. presentation at Masque Community Theatre.

Austin Simmons, project manager if Unicorp becomes the city's partner in the \$300 million project, scoffed at those who question its success.

"Trust me, those people are wrong," said Simmons, who has worked with city officials for months and interviewed residents about community needs. "You have what it takes to accomplish this."

One woman in the audience questioned how Temple Terrace can succeed when Hyde Park and others have failed.

"What they lack is the critical piece, the connection to make the draw," Simmons replied. The plan provides critical elements, including civic space, a cultural center and grocery in an area bounded by major roads, Simmons said. "By its own nature, it will create its own energy."

Redevelopment is to start southeast of Bullard Parkway and 56th Street, site of an old shopping center. The mix of retail and residential development also includes a new city hall and museum.

"We're not going to build buildings and hope they come. We're going to build buildings for tenants we have," said Unicorp partner Chuck Whittall. The Orlando company has recruited national retailers and restaurants for its other mixed-use projects.

Cities across Florida know successful redevelopment is possible, said Troy Russ, an urban design and transportation specialist with the land planning firm of Glatting Jackson.

"Our approach is to make the city walkable," said Russ, who has worked on Baldwin Park Town Center and other Unicorp projects.

The Temple Terrace plan has several pluses, including a strong civic element, good business mix and a riverfront park, Russ said.

Renderings of the plan Russ projected showed curbless streets, fountains and other water elements designed in "a celebration of the river" that flows through the city.

Announced at Friday night's session was an offer by Anheuser-Busch distributor Tom Pepin to lead a committee to raise \$2 million in corporate contributions for redevelopment. Pepin grew up here, and "The family considers Temple Terrace its home," said Peter Hobson, the beer distributor's in-house attorney.

Also, Temple Terrace Redevelopment Director Ralph Bosek announced that the Metropolitan Planning Organization's technical advisory committee has recommended annual funding of Temple Terrace road improvement projects starting in 2011 with \$1.5 million. The city is seeking \$10.7 million over five years for roadway improvements such as the 56th Street/Busch Boulevard intersection.

"Typically, once they've started funding a project, they continue to do so," Bosek said later.