

# Location Of Postal Facility Discussed

By **CANDACE J. SAMOLINSKI** The Tampa Tribune

Published: Aug 5, 2006

TEMPLE TERRACE - If there's one thing Temple Terrace residents have learned, it's that nothing is certain when it comes to redevelopment.

Every rendering depicting the city's vision of a revitalized downtown has included a post office as an anchor. The existing post office will be torn down along with surrounding stores to make room for redevelopment. The only unanswered question it seemed was where it would be built within the 35-acre parcel along 56th Street from Bullard Parkway south to the Hillsborough River.

On Wednesday night, city leaders learned it's far from a done deal.

Postal representatives held a public meeting at Temple Terrace City Hall to discuss their plans for a 6,700-square-foot retail facility. Only city leaders and staff attended the meeting, which was dominated by questions about the future of the third-busiest post office in the Tampa Bay area.

Postal real estate specialist Kenny Griffin said he's willing to work with the city, but there are no guarantees because all projects must be approved in Washington. A post office location typically is chosen through a competitive bidding process.

"Our policy always has been in the past to open it up to competition, but if there's a legitimate reason not to, then we have the latitude to do that," he said during the meeting.

How quickly the city can get a developer and architect involved also will play a role in the selection process. The Postal Service wants to move quickly, Griffin told the crowd.

"We have a standard-design building; we just need a piece of dirt to put it on," Griffin said.

Community Services Director Ralph Bosek said the goal is to have a developer onboard by Nov. 1. The city is sending out a request for qualifications in order to attract a new developer after its former partner, Unicorp National Developments of Orlando, pulled out in July.

It will, however, take more than a standard design to comply with design guidelines the city adopted this year. The guidelines call for tile roofs, stucco facades and specific lighting styles on all new commercial buildings in the community redevelopment area.

How much it will cost to build a post office in keeping with the guidelines also could dictate whether it stays in the redevelopment area, said Gary Sawtelle, a Postal Service spokesman.

Councilwoman Glenda Venable assured the postal representatives, "We can be cheap."

The city is eager to keep the post office in the redevelopment area and willing to make concessions to make that happen, Bosek said. He discussed several options, including hiring an architect to work with the Postal Service on constructing a building, then leasing it to the Postal Service. The city also could sell the property to a developer as part of a larger package, lease it back and sublease it to the Postal Service at a reduced rate.

The city council must approve any deal with the Postal Service.

The Postal Service is seeking public comment during the next two weeks and plans to report back to the city once it narrows the potential location to a 10-mile radius. Written comments will be accepted at 1735 N. Brown Road, Suite 200, Lawrenceville GA 30043-6078.