

Temple Terrace Revitalization Hits Setback

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TEMPLE TERRACE - The developer leading Temple Terrace's downtown revitalization efforts wants more concessions before it seals a deal with the city.

Hoping to negotiate a new agreement, the partnership of Ram Development Co. and Pinnacle Realty Advisors has submitted notice that it is backing out of a deal that includes its purchase from the city of 20.36 acres southeast of Bullard Parkway and 56th Street for \$14.9 million.

Ram/Pinnacle was expected to transform the site into a combination of retail, residential, office, restaurant and cultural components.

The city had planned to close on the land deal next Monday. However, on Sept. 3, the city granted Ram/Pinnacle a nine-month extension to meet the terms of the deal. Among other things, Ram/Pinnacle had been unable to sign on the second of two anchor tenants, a requirement of the agreement.

In exchange for the additional time, the developer agreed to pay the city a monthly fee of \$25,000 to cover the interest the city owes on its purchase of the land. Ram/Pinnacle also would pay the city a \$400,000 deposit fee at the time of the sale.

Ram spokesman Bob Skinner said Monday's notice was sent in the hopes of renegotiating the agreement and to avoid putting the \$400,000 at risk.

"We have a tight fuse because of the short timeframe and we want to protect ourselves if the project doesn't materialize," Skinner said.

Councilman Ron Govin, the council's liaison in staff-developer negotiations, said he doesn't have a lot of confidence the council will grant more concessions.

"Because of the economic times, we should not terminate the deal," Govin said. "But, if it doesn't go forward, I'm here to do it again. The city has to get this done. The quicker the city does it, the quicker the city will get rid of its debt."

The city council has scheduled a meeting for 8:30 a.m. Friday at City Hall to consider how to proceed.

Temple Terrace spokesman Michael Dunn said the city is "willing to do whatever it takes to get the project back on track. We think it's largely due to the economic environment."

This is not the first significant setback to the revitalization effort. In August 2005, voters rejected a bid to issue bonds to help the city pay for redevelopment. In July 2006, developer Unicorp National Developments withdrew from the project.

The city has been engaged in negotiations with Ram/Pinnacle over details and the diminishing scope of the project since it was selected as the developer in October 2006.