

Leaders Share Vision For Temple Terrace

By PAUL CATALA, Tribune correspondent

Published: September 15, 2007

TAMPA - Two Temple Terrace leaders recently shared their vision for the city's redevelopment with others interested in urban design.

Grant Rimbey, president of Citizens for the Revitalization of Temple Terrace, and Ralph Bosek, Temple Terrace community services director, took part Sept. 8 in the first of three Urban Charrette Community Forum Series presentations. Workshops also are scheduled for Nov. 10 and Jan. 12.

Co-founded by Tampa intern architects Taryn Sabia and Adam Fritz, the Urban Charrette is designed to help communities customize their amenities and functions for their residents through workshops and small meetings.

About 55 people - including local government leaders, architects, city planners and designers - got together at the Tampa Museum of Art for the six-hour workshop to discuss trends in urban design. Among the topics discussed were creating 'walkable' downtowns, designing pedestrian-friendly streets and health promotion in urban design.

Rimbey, a Tampa-based architect, and Bosek have been involved in plans to revitalize downtown Temple Terrace since the idea took hold in 2001. During their hourlong presentation, they summarized the process so far and told charrette guests how the city plans to move forward with redevelopment.

On Aug. 2, 2005, a \$300 million redevelopment project to transform downtown Temple Terrace into modern condominiums, cafes, boutiques, fountains and bike trails was rejected by voters. They voted against having the city issue revenue bonds to help pay for one-fifth of the project through a 1-mill increase in property taxes.

Although that vote pushed back the tide of redevelopment's initial surge, proponents are moving forward to reinvent about 225 acres of the city's downtown.

Rimbey said the revitalization efforts are focused on about 35 acres southeast of Bullard Parkway and 56th Street, site of Terrace Plaza and Kash n' Karry Plaza, that the city bought for \$22 million in October 2003.

After giving an overview on the history of Temple Terrace since its founding in 1921, Rimbey discussed some of the plans by designers and architects. He told the guests it wasn't when or whether the city would transform, but 'how' it would happen. He said his and the group's goal is to help redevelop the city based on a 1922 city master plan that was rediscovered in 2001.

'It's the saga of how you take a greyfield shopping center and turn it into a real downtown,' Rimbey said.

Following Rimbey, Bosek updated those at the workshop on how the city is moving forward despite the 2005 bond referendum defeat. He said the best opportunities for funding are coming from the Hillsborough County Metropolitan Planning Organization, the Florida Department of Transportation and the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Bosek said the project's developer, Pinnacle/Ram, would pay back the original \$22 million invested by the city in the plazas. Additionally, he said, \$20 million has been lined up through grants, loans and appropriations to help pay for the city's new streetscaping, two parking centers and an arts and education center.

Bosek said that although the city's project has been put on hold and somewhat scaled back, residents and visitors in the Tampa Bay area should start looking for a new Temple Terrace.

'Redevelopment can take up to 20 years. It doesn't take just a few months,' he said. 'The reality of public work is it takes awhile. We just need to stay the course, don't give up and we'll get there.'

After the charrette, Fritz said that Rimbey and Bosek's presentation showed what the charrettes were designed for - to help provide vision for growth and planning.

'One of the things that really hit home is what Grant said, that professionals need to be more involved in these processes,' he said. 'I think Grant and Ralph's determination to do the right thing and make Temple Terrace a walkable, livable community should be applauded. It's an excellent effort on their parts.'

Other speakers included Vikas Mehta, assistant professor at the University of South Florida School of Architecture and Community Design, and Marc J. Yacht, former director of the Pasco County Health Department.