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An Open Letter to: Residents of Temple Terrace

Please Share With Others

Because of my deep concern for the direction in which the "Revitalization Program" has been taken and because so many new problems have been uncovered since I wrote my first letter, I respectfully send this second letter. The many problems this project presents should bring shudders to any dedicated person seeking what is really best for Temple Terrace.

I appreciate and respect our elected officials because I know they would like to do something great for the City. However, I am afraid that we have failed them by not letting them know what we, the rank and file tax payer, really wants to see done on this city project.

Please do not think that I am against redevelopment. I was on the City Council when we voted to redevelop that blighted area. But, what we hear now is not what we envisioned then. I will be very much for it again when it is clear that we are building what the City needs and what the city can afford.

I have reared four children in Temple Terrace and now have two children and six grand children living here. I do not want to burden them for a lifetime of city debt just because the planning was not more carefully thought out. I am sure that most of you feel the same way for your family.

This rush to get the citizens to approve a bond issue is putting the Cart before the horse. We are being asked to blindly buy a Pig in the poke. After we agree to pay for it, will it not then be too late for us to see what we have bought?? In any proper business arrangement the buyers should know what is in the sack. The buyers should know that the contents of the sack is really what they want to buy.

Voting NO!! August 2, 2005 will not stop the Revitalization effort. Rather it will give the City and the Citizens of Temple Terrace time to get it right. If it is determined that it is absolutely necessary, under state law the City can go out again for a bond approval in six months. Hopefully, by then many of the problems that now exist in the program can be resolved. Our NO vote will also send a message to those responsible that we want, and demand, a practical and affordable solution.

We have been told that if we delay this action, it will cost us money as prices may rise. However, prices may not rise. One thing is certain, to go forward now, before a viable course is found, will certainly cost us far more in the long run.

(Over Please)

PLEASE TELL YOUR COUNCIL HOW YOU FEEL!!!

The majority of us have not spoken out to our Council. We have let a few with special interests sound like they were representing everyone. They have not. **There is time yet for us to say STOP and let's get it right.**

I ask you, as my friends and neighbors, to please study the enclosed fact sheets and carefully consider the concerns that make this the most important vote in the history of our city. We all love Temple Terrace as our delightful residential home. Let's not destroy that feature by going too far. If we put all of our money in this basket, how can we support the rest of our areas and services?

So many have said that they oppose this mad rush to commit us to a very heavy debt before we can even know what we are getting for such indebtedness. **Being opposed to it is not enough.** To make a difference, every registered voter who wants this to be gotten right first, **MUST** get to the polls and tell them by saying **NO!! To vote early please take the few minutes needed to go by the Library and VOTE NO; or vote at your regular polling place August 2nd.**

With my sincerest appreciation and respect,

Your Friend and Neighbor,



Bill Hammontree



PLEASE REVIEW THESE IMPORTANT FACTS:

1. Risky project has big potential for cut in City services. The City has stated that the exit strategy if the bond issue fails will include diverting \$1 million in CIT funds and \$1 million in gas taxes to drive the project, "at the cost of curtailing all current uses of the funds," (Memo dated 4/27/05 from City Finance Director.) This means cutting future services. Would the same thing not happen even if they had the bond money but the cost of the project climbed higher?
2. If Unicorp's expertise and soundness is thought to be good enough for our City to gamble with our future, could it be that the facts reported in the Orlando Sentinel on May 23, 2005 (page

A.1) regarding Unicorp's touted Baldwin Park Development near Orlando are being ignored? Mark Schlueb, Sentinel Staff Writer states:

"All is not well in Baldwin Park, Orlando's showplace . . . At least 70 liens totaling 1.7 million have been filed...." "We've refused to do anything else out there unless we get paid in advance." (said one contractor)..." It was a fiasco and continues to be a fiasco" said Mike Curry, VP of Dixie Southern Industrial." "I am very dissatisfied with the contractor and the owners and the whole process". "Dixie Southern Industrial has filed liens totaling \$64,914. It has been joined by a long list of other subcontractors covering nearly every construction trade: drywall, roofing, plumbing, glass, masonry, air conditioning, electrical and more."

I am sure that our fine City Attorney will not let an agreement be signed that is not a well secured contract. However, Unicorp's representative acknowledged that they were just a shell company with a little over \$3 million in assets. Some one with deep pockets had better be in the contract. But, please understand, I am not opposed to the project because of the ones with whom they are dealing. **I am against the project because it is too big and our taxes will escalate upward.** It seems that the only way we can get back to basics is to vote **NO** on the Bonds.

3. The fact that we are now left with just one bidder, what would make the tax payer believe Unicorp, or any other lone bidder, would negotiate to give the City the best deal available? Why should they? We will probably hear some saying "It is too late to try to get other developers; we will just have to go with what we have." It is not too late if we start looking now for a more reasonable solution, then others would want to bid.

4. Many believe that this development will bring people into our City to visit the Center. Are we trying to create a destination city, or is improving the quality of life for our residents the aim that comes first? Do you want to pay taxes so people from miles around can use our facilities? Do we want to face the traffic and law enforcement issues this will bring?

5. For years in all developments in Temple Terrace the developer has been required to provide the infrastructure, including roads, sewers, water and electricity. Why is the tax payer now being asked to pick up the tab for this project? Having been on the Council at the time the **North-West Quadrant** was redeveloped, I know that we required the builders to not only pay the City a profit on the property we had put together, we required them to provide all of the infrastructure, even to the moving of one City street to another location.

6. **BAD PLANNING**, the City got has gotten into the land speculation business but it can lose millions. In '01 and '02 the thought was they would amass the land, change the zoning and sell it to a developer at a price sufficient to allow the City to keep the land needed for government buildings and parks at no cost to the City. **HAS THIS HAPPENED?** That is not what is being proposed now! They do not seem to be holding out as the council did for the **North-West Quadrant**. Why? Well, could it be the "press ahead no matter what the cost" mentality. During World War II, a Naval Officer put it in language that I will not repeat, but many of you know his oft quoted statement about the torpedoes. He was brave and fearless, but he was in a war. We do not need to have our leaders going full speed ahead into dangerous waters that are teeming with unknown numbers of torpedoes until we know all is clear. After spending \$21,000,000 the City still needs to purchase 6 more parcels from 5 owners. How much more are they going to have to spend?

(Over Please)

7. It is obvious that many uncertainties remain and neither the Council nor their consultants know what this project will cost nor how it will be financed. Tuesday night's meeting of the Council clearly brought this out. Many figures that have been released to the public were brought into doubt. It is certainly clear that the bond figures we have been given as the cost to the City does not include some \$17,000,000 dollars of interest costs. Councilman Chillura demanded that they get all of these figures accurate so that both the Council and the public will know what we are doing. My belief is that we should not vote for approval of a bond issue until a reputable accounting firm, or other qualified professionals, makes a feasibility study that proves we will not be looking at continuing tax increases over and over again. We need assurances that are better than just pipe dream promises that all is going to be well. We need to be shown that it can be financed within our means. This has not been done.

At the July 19th Council meeting an appeal was made that we just had to get this finalized so that we could begin collecting the TIF money. That is tax money the County will allow to come to the City for a development of this type. It will come for a reasonable project just as well as the elaborate one being proposed. Let's let the Council know that we want them to slow down until **they get it right.**

8. The present plan shows the narrowing of 56th Street to "calm" the traffic. With the creation of 529,000 sq. ft. of government, office and retail space, along with 842 new housing units, it has been estimated that this will create conservatively 16,000 additional automotive trips a day. 56th Street is already burdened with 50,000 trips a day. Why in the world would you inconvenience your commuting citizens with the double hit of a project that increases traffic and at the same time reduce the capacity of the only arterial highway in the area???

9. Two nationally recognized developers have already dropped out, with one stating, "We cannot identify a path to a financial success." The other said that "Market study had become dated and supports only modest absorption of various product types, and at sale prices that are not economic in our belief." Yet, it seems that we are hearing some saying they believe the numbers show it will be a good project. Who has the most experience in making this judgment?? I believe that I want to trust the people who have a proven track record, and **I will do so by voting NO until it is shown to be a sound and practical project.**

11. We should ask this question that is not being discussed: **Why do we need a new City Hall??** We have a City Hall that is easy to reach with ample parking. A far lesser amount can be spent to upgrade the present facility that would be necessary in the new development. The third floor is occupied by the Police Department. A new Police Station on less expensive land would be a reasonable compromise. The City Hall would serve wonderfully for our City for an indefinite period.

Please vote NO August 2, 2005. Say "get it right first" then ask for our vote!!!

For other facts written by many of your friends and neighbors, as well as articles from other publications on this subject, go to Web site CDITT.com