

LOCAL SEPTEMBER 13, 2016 3:21 PM

# Would-be developers make their pitches for Bradenton redevelopment project

Bradenton officials hear latest proposals to develop

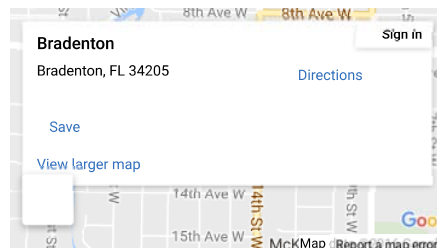


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Bradenton officials hear a second effort for a grocery store on the failed Minnie L. Rogers site. **Mark Young** - Bradenton Herald

BY MARK YOUNG  
[myoung@bradenton.com](mailto:myoung@bradenton.com)

BRADENTON — City officials, along with the Central Community Redevelopment Agency advisory board, took a closer look on Tuesday at two proposals to once again attempt to develop the Minnie L. Rogers Plaza at the corner of 13th Avenue West and First Street.





After years of sitting empty and failed efforts to develop property at the corner of 13th Avenue West and First Street, city officials heard two new proposals. Grant Jefferies - Bradenton Herald file photo

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Both proposals focused on fulfilling a need for quality groceries in the area, but the path to get there couldn't be in more contrast.

"We've been very intentional in how we delivered another attempt at this and have received distinctly different responses, said KC George, of the National Development Council.

An invitation to bid was sent out in June and two developers and Suncoast Community Capital responded in July. One of the developers failed to meet a deadline to submit more information, leaving SCC and Sarasota-based Beneficial Communities as the two finalists.

Beneficial developer Ken Bowron Jr. acknowledged the challenges of the past, as well as the challenges of the future.

"I know you've been down this road before and got super close and it just didn't come to pass," said Bowron. "I'm not going to promise you the world. All I can do is tell you we are going to work with you to bring this plaza to fruition."

ADVERTISING

Beneficial's proposal features a grocery store and approximately 90 units of affordable

housing.

“You have 8,000 residents in these neighborhoods within a mile of the next store,” he said. “The citizens deserve more than that and it’s an imperative need in that area. How are we going to get it done? It won’t be easy.”

To be paid for, Beneficial’s project would need to qualify for \$15 million in tax credits to build the \$20 million project. The tax credit process is not only very competitive, but ultimately relies on a lottery system to even be considered. The Florida Housing Corp. funds about 20 projects a year, but submissions number around 200.

SCC Executive Director Tim Dutton brought forth a proposal that would not rely on tax credits, but would likely take just as long. Dutton’s proposal is admittedly, “more conceptual with very little data. It’s more around the ideas of how development can happen.”

Dutton said he doesn’t have a problem with retail grocery store chains, but those stores do not not increase neighborhood economy the same way as his proposal would.

“For every \$1 spent on local businesses, 45 cents is invested back into the community,” said Dutton. “For every \$1 spent at a corporate-owned business, 15 cents is invested back into the community. That’s an important thing when it comes to family income of the area. All of these things point to job creation and family income when ownership tends to be local.”

The CCRA advisory board scored the two proposals and will make a recommendation to the city council soon. CCRA Chairman Steve Thompson said the CCRA is not giving up on the community dream that began with community meetings in 2006.

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**WE’VE LEARNED A PAINFUL LESSON, BUT WE  
AREN’T QUITTING.**

CCRA advisory board Chairman Steve Thompson

The site was once targeted to build the plaza, anchored by a Save-A-Lot grocery store. The process was marred by empty promises from then developer, Wisconsin-based Endeavor Corp., which never followed through with development. The project finally collapsed in January when Endeavor demanded more money from the city, which was rejected.

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#### MINNIE L. ROGERS PLAZA TIMELINE

**2006: CCRA HOLDS COMMUNITY MEETINGS ENCOURAGING THE GROCERY STORE.**

**2012: ENDEAVOR CORP. SECURES \$6 MILLION IN FEDERAL TAX CREDITS.**

**2012: A MINNIE L. ROGERS PLAQUE IS CREATED IN ANTICIPATION OF THE NEW PLAZA.**

**2012: THE CITY HOLDS A GROUND BREAKING CEREMONY.**

**2013: CCRA AGREES TO SEVERAL DEVELOPER DEMANDS, INCLUDING LOANS AND BECOMING THE MASTER LEASE HOLDER.**

**2014: THE CITY COUNCIL SIGNS OFF ON A DEED VALUED AT \$750,000 TO BE GIVEN TO THE CCRA, WHICH IN TURN IS HANDED OVER TO THE DEVELOPER AT NO COST.**

**2015: ENDEAVOR SAYS THE PROJECT IS "SHOVEL READY" AS IT GAINS A PARTNER THAT HELPS SECURE \$1.5 MILLION IN ADDITIONAL STATE TAX CREDITS.**

**2015: ENDEAVOR BALKS YET AGAIN, RETURNS TO THE CITY DEMANDING MORE MONEY. CITY REJECTS THE DEMAND.**

**2016: IN JANUARY, THE PROJECT COLLAPSES AND CITY CITES ENDEAVOR TO BE IN BREACH OF CONTRACT.**

**2016: IN JUNE, THE CITY RELEASES A NEW INVITATION TO BID.**

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Dutton's proposal was praised for thinking outside the box, but after 10 years of trying and four years of empty promises, those involved expressed a sense of urgency to make the grocery store a reality.

Councilman Patrick Roff liked the model, "but I'm not sure this site and this time is something that we have the luxury of having a great experiment."

Mark Young: 941-745-7041, @urbanmark2014

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