

# WHICH WAY DOWNTOWN

GEDALIUS  
a Tribune

Ashley Drive cater to commuters? of the debate city try to transform way to downtown. HDR Engineer on a City Council on firm's preliminary to be five lanes six. Plans call northbound lane.

Linda Saul-Sena g that designers and eliminate in each direction. ast five lanes are traffic jams leading ate 275. pedestrian friendly Saul-Sena said. trumping urban prompting, several attended Thurs- ing to urge the city mber of lanes on

Minder, who also um of Art board rida Avenue and uld be able to ab- orted from Ashley.

# nobee Beat Low

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Saul-Sena

Ashley Drive "is not  
as pedestrian friendly  
as it needs to be," city  
councilwoman says.

"I'm an advocate for great urban design, but I'm not seeing that," Minder said. "We failed to look at our city as a pedestrian-friendly city."

Heidi Shimerberg, who is spearheading the effort to build a new Children's Museum on Ashley, asked the council to consider the children in strollers and grandparents trying to safely cross Ashley.

Councilman Joseph Caetano suggested the city consider building a pedestrian overpass.

Saul-Sena put her hand on her forehead and shook her head in dismay.

Many urban designers dislike pedestrian overpasses because the tubes keep people from frequenting shops and other amenities on the street level.

Other plans HDR presented Thursday call for reducing lane widths from 12 feet to 10 or 11 feet, widening sidewalks and adding curbside parking on the east side of Ashley.

A workshop on the issue will be scheduled for June.

Reporter Ellen Gedalius can be reached at [egedalius@tampatrib.com](mailto:egedalius@tampatrib.com) or (813) 259-7679.

## Schools Get \$3 Million For Teacher Pay Plans

TAMPA — The Hillsborough County school district will receive an extra \$3,088,827 through a federal grant to help implement its teacher pay-for-performance plans.

The grant, which could bring up to \$15.4 million to the district over five years, is part of a \$13.6 million package for four Florida districts announced Thursday by the U.S. Department of Education and Sen. Mel Martinez. The other recipients are Orange, Miami-Dade and Lake counties. The largest grant goes to Orange County, \$6.6 million this year with a possible \$27.3 million over five years.

Hillsborough's money will be used for technology and other software to create the complex pay-for-performance model, which shows which teachers do the best job based on student scores, Superintendent MaryEllen Elia said. The money will also be used to strengthen a partnership for leadership and teacher training with the David C. Anchin Center at the University of South Florida, she said.

Recruiting teachers for the district's neediest schools and in critical shortage areas is also part of the grant application, Elia said. The grant could help Hillsborough become a model for implementing pay for performance statewide, she said.

## Engineering Conference Looks At Robotics

TAMPA — Engineers from across the state gathered Thursday to explore new ways to make robots a more active part of our daily lives.

The University of South Florida Robotics Conference, which continues today, includes more than 100 academics and students who are sharing ideas about everything from micromachines to robots in space.

One area of research is how robots can serve people with disabilities. In Thursday's demonstration, "Dancing with Technology," students and instructors from the USF dance department used Segways and specially equipped wheelchairs to show how technology and art can marry, and how robots can assist dancers with physical limitations.

The dance will be repeated in the concert "Under Construction," featuring the Bay Area Dance Co. on

## SCHOOL HOPES TO JOIN ELITE ACADEMIC CORPS

By ADAM EMERSON  
The Tampa Tribune

TAMPA — The University of South Florida plans to hire hundreds of professors and conduct more ambitious research that calls for a \$1.2 billion investment over the next five years.

USF's Board of Trustees on Thursday approved the university's long-term plan leaders say will usher its name into the invitation-only academic corps known as the Association of American Universities.

Entry to the group depends on the university winning millions in federal research dollars in that time, USF leaders say, and the only way to do that is to recruit high-powered professors.

That costs money. The 200 faculty members USF is seeking in that time, for instance, will cost \$24 million in salary and benefits.

Gov. Charlie Crist recently vetoed a 5 percent tuition hike for all state universities and community colleges. The revenue from that increase would have totaled about \$24 mil-

ion for USF, said Ralph Wilcox, the university's vice provost.

To get the money USF needs to achieve its goals "is going to be an uphill battle," Wilcox said Thursday.

Despite the financial uncertainties, university leaders and board members cherished what they called a "bold" plan, which also calls for stepped-up fundraising and admitting more graduate students.

The plan also calls for managing student enrollment. The number of students on all of USF's campuses is expected to grow 20 percent to 53,000 students by 2014, but there won't be much growth at the university's Tampa campus. Wilcox called for "controlled, modest growth" there, preferring instead to recruit better-performing students, continuing a trend in its admissions.

This fall's prospective freshman class is the university's smartest ever. More than half of the students admitted had at least an A-minus average in high school.

The university wants to admit more students who can graduate in four or five years, Wilcox said. Most of the growth in the USF system will be at its Lakeland, St. Petersburg and Sarasota campuses. Yet even there, growth will slow from years past.

# Pour Money Into Research

It also wants to admit more students who can graduate in four or five years.

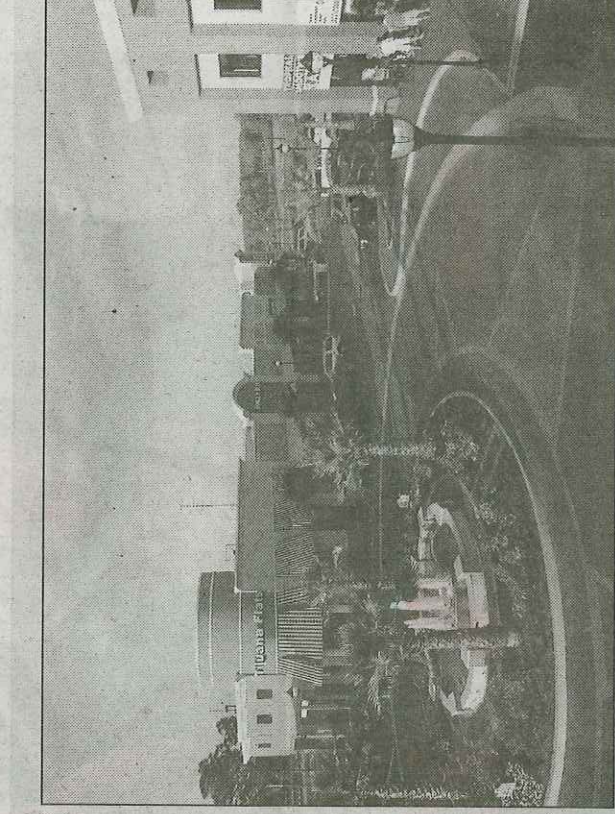
Much of the investment in the university's long-term plan will come from the university's foundation, which has assets now totaling more than \$330 million. The university is planning a fundraising campaign to raise more than \$500 million.

University leaders say the private money is critical because of withdrawing support from the state Legislature. "How in the world we pull this plan off with the capital support we've received over the last few years is beyond me," trustee Lee Arnold Jr. said.

In other business, the board announced that the university hired an engineering dean, John Wiencsek. Wiencsek is the chemical and biochemical chairman at the University of Iowa's College of Engineering.

Reporter Adam Emerson can be reached at [aemerson@tampatrib.com](mailto:aemerson@tampatrib.com) or (813) 259-8285.

RELATED STORY, BUSINESS, Page 1  
USF takes steps to curb music piracy.



Tribune file photo by JAY NOLAN  
The Westchase Town Center has leased 19 of its 20 retail units and four of its 13 office spaces. It plans to add commercial and residential space.

## Retail, Commercial Center Nearly Full

Despite a slow start, the Westchase Town Center has almost fully leased its retail space.

Real Property Specialists, the Orlando-based company developing the center off Linebaugh Avenue, just north of Tampa, reports 19 of the 20 retail units have been leased. Four of the 13 office spaces have been leased.

Some retail tenants — such as Cold Stone Creamery and an organic food store — have not moved in yet.  
Cold Stone representatives say

Jason Geary

June 9 at 8 p.m. in Theatre I on the USF campus. For information, call (813) 974-2311.

Kurt Loft

## Theater Companies Show Interest In Closed Cinema

PLANT CITY — Potential new tenants are looking at the Lake Walden Cinema 8, the city's only movie house until it closed this year.

The theater was an anchor for 15 years at the Lake Walden Square shopping center, and retailers there hope a new cinema will take over the site soon.

"I know there have been a couple [theater] companies talking to the landlord with one saying they might try to open by July 1," Bob Shearer said. His sports bar, Bob's Sports

has no doubts about what the closure has done to his bottom line.

"Business has been off about 30 to 35 percent since the theater closed," he said. "It makes a big difference when you have 4,500 people walking by the front door. Many of those people are going to Lakeland or Brandon."

Carmike Cinemas, a Georgia-based company specializing in communities with populations of less than 100,000, bought the 25,899-square-foot Lake Walden Cinema 8 from Floyd Theatres in 1995. It closed the theater in March.

Kevin Brady

## Vendors Are Sought For July 4 Celebration

PLANT CITY — Arts and crafts vendors are wanted for the sixth annual July 4 celebration in Plant City. The celebration will be 5 to 10 p.m. at Plant City Stadium on Park road.

Time is growing short to reserve a booth. To make a reservation or for information, call Chris Washburn at (813) 659-4200, Ext. 4340, or e-mail [cwashburn@plantcitygov.com](mailto:cwashburn@plantcitygov.com).

The Independence Day celebration is one of the city's biggest events.

Barbara Kent

## HIGHLANDS

## Crist Approves Civic Center In Sebring

SEBRING — For five years, the Highlands County Fair Board has been trying to get \$2 million from the state to build a 3,000-seat arena. It was vetoed at least once by Gov. Jeb Bush.

This year, Gov. Charlie Crist, who cut \$460 million from the 2007 budget, let the downtown Sebring civic center get through.

"We were tickled to death to get it," said fair association General Manager Artie McIntyre, who was notified Thursday by state Rep. Denise Grimley's office. The idea was conceived in 2002, and the group has been trying to win money for an agriculture center since 2003, he said.

"It's been a long time coming," Grimley said of the civic center. The project is justified in a couple of ways, she said: It's an economic development tool that can attract events such as boat and car shows, and it will become the county's largest hurricane shelter.

McIntyre hopes construction will start after the February fair season and be complete in a year.

Gary Pinnell

# ACROSS THE REGION