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Agency to lay out downtown projects

CRA plan goes before commission Tuesday

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An agency has to have a plan after it collects tax money.

The Community Redevelopment Agency will put its updated Community Redevelopment Plan before the Planning and Zoning Commission at 9 a.m. Tuesday.

The plan includes more residential housing in the downtown area and a stronger shopping and entertainment district for residents and visitors.

Among the public projects the plan calls for the agency to finance:

- Road improvements
- Sewer improvements
- Parks and beautification
- Street lights
- Parking buildings
- Adding community police officers through the Cape Coral Police Department.

The money to finance the projects comes from tax-increment financing. TIF money is property tax dollars raised in the Community Redevelopment area that state statute requires to be spent within the area.

“We should have about \$2 million in the next year,” agency director Suzanne Kuehan said. “As the developers come in and values increase, we’ll have more and can do more.”

Included in the plan are new height increases for buildings allowed in various redevelopment areas. In some areas, buildings could go up to 12

A SAMPLING OF MAJOR UPDATES TO THE COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT PLAN

- Plan and build pedestrian and bicycle paths
- Improve traffic flows and roads
- Build parking garages for free parking
- Optimize park spaces
- Finance a community policing department
- Encourage building of offices, restaurants, outdoor cafes, public spaces such as meeting rooms, hotels, and marinas
- Adopt new zoning districts to allow buildings with heights from six to 12 stories

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stories. In other areas, the height limit is set at six floors.

The plan calls for condominiums to sit on top of offices, stores and restaurants at the lower levels.

The idea is to make the downtown a thriving place for people to live, work and spend their recreation time walking rather than driving.

"I'm most interested in seeing that there is a balance between the commercial development in the area and the residential," commissioner Walter Fluegel said. "That's the key."

The Planning & Zoning Commission makes its recommendations, and the plan will go to the city council for its approval or rejection.

Community Redevelopment Agencies are created to last 30 years.

Cities have the option of renewing the agencies.

The current agency would expire in 2017, but the plan extends the agency for another 30 years.

The plan also sets out spending intentions for public projects in the area.

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