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CRA to discuss expansion, lot size issue

600-acre area under consideration

By Pete Skiba

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Meeting building standards on smaller lots in Cape Coral's downtown redevelopment area can pose problems for developers and businesses, officials believe.

The Community Redevelopment Agency may have a solution to that problem. The organization will look at that solution and discuss a study that could lead to the expansion of the Community Redevelopment area from 432 acres to more than 600 acres for its 5:30 p.m. meeting today in city hall.

IF YOU GO

- What: Community Redevelopment Agency meeting
- When: 5:30 p.m. today
- Where: Cape Coral City Hall, 1015 Cultural park boulevard

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"The blight study is necessary for any expansion the CRA might undertake," said Suzanne Kuehn, the agency's executive director.

"We get people in the office every day asking us if we can expand."

A study in 1986 declared the downtown's original 432 acres blighted. Any area added to the area must also be blighted before it can enter into the area that proposes to be a place where people can live, work, dine out and play.

Blight can consist of buildings that require more than routine maintenance such as paint or minor repairs. It also includes buildings that do not provide adequate or safe shelter.

The redevelopment area covers Cape Coral's downtown from Tudor Drive to the west along both sides of Cape Coral Parkway to the Cape Coral Bridge at the east. A section runs north along Del Prado Boulevard to Southeast 44th Street.

The larger expansion areas sit south of Miramar Street to Bimini Canal and east of Waikiki Avenue to the Caloosahatchee River.

Subject to rules requiring parking, walkable areas, landscaping and other amenities for what has been called an urban village, buildings in the area must also be able to show a profit for their developers.

The Cape Coral Redevelopment Agency proposes launching a contest for designers to meet the challenge of designing profitable,

architecturally-appealing buildings to go on standard commercial, downtown lots. Those lots are usually 6,250 or 12,500 square feet.

"The bigger developments can design whole blocks to meet the standard and make themselves profitable," said John Jacobsen, a board member.

"We don't want to preclude smaller businesses from developing in the CRA."

Other discussion this evening:

- Updates on a utilities master plan. The redevelopment agency is considering a master plan to upgrade sewer and water lines throughout the area.
- Update on a payment in lieu of providing parking plan. The agency board members are considering alternatives to allow developers to pay for parking on lots, or in parking buildings to be built near their site rather than on their lots.
- Update on sign program, including but not limited to logo design.
- Reports on alleys. A plan for possibly consolidating trash pick up at fewer industrial trash containers is on the agenda.
- Updates on marketing programs and proposed redevelopment projects are on the schedule.

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