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Cape CRA rules revised

Downtown district has new zoning

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Cape Coral's downtown redevelopment district is operating under new zoning rules to help spur development.

The 432-acre district now is divided into three sections, each with its own set of permitted uses. For example, buildings up to six stories and 85 feet high are allowed in the edge district, extending north on Del Prado Parkway to Southeast 44th Street. Meanwhile, structures up to 12 stories and 150 feet high are in the gateway area, which goes from the Cape Coral Bridge along Cape Coral Parkway a block past Tudor Drive.

The Cape Coral City Council on Monday approved the changes for the area, which stretches along both sides of Cape Coral Parkway from the Cape Coral Bridge on the east to Tudor Court to the west. A portion extends north along Del Prado Boulevard to 44th Street.

Developers have talked about more than \$1 billion in projects for the area. More than 1,000 businesses are located there. They employ an estimated 3,500 workers. About 11,000 people are expected to work and live there one day.

To prepare for that day, city officials want to develop a mix of condominiums,

IN OTHER BUSINESS

In other business Monday, the Cape Coral City Council:

- Learned that owners of The Golf Club plan to demolish the clubhouse. The course closed last August. Some residents want the city to buy the course and keep it for golf or a park. So far, the city has declined to make an offer for the property.
- Learned that the proposed property tax changes being debated in Tallahassee could reduce the city's income from property taxes by about \$71 million from the current \$105 million.
- Discussed a slowdown in hiring for unfilled city positions until more is known about the property tax issue for next year's budget.
- Approved Avalon Engineering to design the Chantry Canal boat ramp at Southeast 24th Avenue and Southeast 15th Terrace. A contract must be negotiated before Avalon can go forward with plans for four ramps, dockmaster's building and picnic shelters. Construction could start in September.
- Accepted video surveillance equipment provided by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. The equipment lets police collect evidence from a long distance for vice and narcotics crimes.

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Building codes the city passed earlier should help developers know what they can do in each of districts, said Community Redevelopment Agency Director Suzanne Kuehn.

Such uniformity is a good step in the area's redevelopment, but it doesn't open the doors like floodgates, said city economic development director Mike Jackson. The CRA has other issues to contend with, including a tax reform measure that could do away with property taxes and increase the state sales tax, Kuehn said.

The CRA relies on property taxes to secure loans and to provide financing for developers.

The Legislature is debating the reform, which could cost the city an estimated \$71 million next year.

The CRA's board will meet at 5:30 tonight to talk about its budget and the tax issues, Kuehn said.

Another concern for the redevelopment district, Jackson said, are utilities, stormwater, transportation and the many small parcels that are difficult to assemble.

Cape Coral needs to find ways to resolve those issues on a large scale rather than project by project, he said.

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