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[Community Redevelopment Agency](#)

## Downtown's alleyways eyed for improvement Study considers widening, repaving, one-way traffic

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Panel trucks swing past trash bins to deliver to stores, back doors open to give workers a place to catch a smoke and double parking seems more a rule than an option in Cape Coral's downtown alleyways.



**Terry Allen**

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The condition of those alleys — potholes and all — is a big concern for the agency in charge of overseeing a massive change to the downtown complete with places for people to live, work, shop and enjoy themselves.

The Community Redevelopment Agency's board hired Vanus Inc. of Tampa to conduct a study outlining alley problems and offering answers. The company's draft study held few surprises and its recommendations are not complete, said Suzanne Kuehn, redevelopment agency executive director.

The idea is to give current businesses the alleys they need to operate efficiently, while encouraging them to keep the alleys clean and neat, Kuehn said.

Lennox, who works in the kitchen at Maria's Restaurant on S.E. 6th Lane, takes a break in the alley behind the restaurant to make a phone call Friday afternoon. The downtown Community Redevelopment Agency had an alleyway study done and discovered traffic, lots of dumpsters and bad pavement.

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"We needed an official study," Kuehn said. "It is a necessity to budget to improve the alleys."

Alleys will not be a part of multi-million dollar to billion-dollar commercial and residential projects encompassing whole blocks at a time along the sides of Cape Coral Parkway in the downtown.

But the existing businesses in the area stretching from Tudor Drive to the west along both sides of Cape Coral Parkway to the bridge to the east need the alleys.

The redevelopment area also extends north on Del Prado Boulevard to Southeast 44th Street.

"The problem with the alleys is that many existing businesses depend on them for deliveries and employee parking," said John Jacobsen, redevelopment agency alley committee member. "The alleys can't just be vacated and shut down. The study didn't tell us anything we didn't know, but it is good to have people with expertise second our common sense."

The alleys studied were too narrow, didn't have room at their entrances or exits for trucks to make easy turns, and for the most part were full of holes, cracks and exposed trash bins.

The alleys also had no signs restricting speed, no stop signs at their intersections and because of road deterioration had storm water runoff problems. The storm water would either sit in potholes or otherwise not make it to drains in the middle of the block.

The study made three major recommendations:

- Widen alleys to 20 feet to provide two-way traffic and relocate utilities underground. This option would cause the alleys to lose some parking and reduce the space between the alleys and the buildings.
- Maintain existing alley widths and repave them. Make the alleys one way.
- Maintain the existing alley sizes but repave them.

### **The study area**

The three alleys used in the \$13,784 study served restaurants, offices, a hairdresser, two churches and a nautical antique store. The scope of the study was limited to three alleys to keep costs reasonable, Kuehn said.

Estimates of the costs to fix the three selected alleys were \$225,846 for the two-way options to \$169,384 for the one-way option.

The three alleys were selected for study as typical of the 64 alleys that thread through the redevelopment area's 442 acres, which have delivery traffic and dumpster pickup, said Susan C. Joel, a transportation director at Vanus Inc.

Two of the alleys, both 265 feet long, run north and south through a downtown block bounded on the north by Southeast 46th Lane and on the south by Southeast 47th Street.

A 1,115-foot-long alley divides the block from Southeast 15th Avenue on the east to Vincennes Boulevard on the west.

The alleys were too narrow at an average 15 feet wide. The area needed to turn into alleys is also too narrow, the study stated. There were no crashes reported in the three alleys from January 2003 to December 2004.

"The city should fine all the building owners for letting the alleys go," said William Soich, owner of SeaQuest Nautical Gallery on Southeast 46th

Lane. "The construction workers drop pallets and make a mess out here. No one takes care of their trash bins."

Both the north-south and the east-west alleys at their intersection were recently covered with asphalt and landscaped.

A builder in the area wasn't too optimistic about the city's ability to repair the alleys.

"I didn't wait for the city to come in and do it," said Brian Kirby of BNL Construction on Southeast 46th Lane. The construction company is owner of the buildings next to the alley. "I just fixed it up because that's what we normally do when we build a building."

Plans call for the alley study to come before the redevelopment board for discussion at its 5:30 p.m. May 9 meeting in City Hall.

Vanus officials might find themselves in for some questions after that meeting.

"I'm not looking for them to tell us how to handle the alleys now," Jacobsen said. "I would like some out-of-the-box thinking about how to handle them not for what is, but for what will be."

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