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Proposed Cape hotels double rooms

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If developers have their way, the number of hotel rooms in Cape Coral could more than double within a few years.

To make the Community Redevelopment Area the major player in the hospitality industry, the area's board on Tuesday sent a zoning change to be mapped by city staff to allow for a 224-room condominium hotel.

It also supported a developer in his proposal to build a boutique-style hotel in the emerging downtown.

The redevelopment agency board unanimously voted to put the now-\$600 million project into the Gateway zone, one of three in the redevelopment area. That zone allows the hotel to be built to 12 stories if it meets criteria set by the city.

"Just because it is in the Gateway zone doesn't mean it will be approved," said city planner Rick Sosnowski. "The developer must follow the process and show the development is to the city's benefit."

The redevelopment area covers Cape Coral's downtown business district. The area runs 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 entire 432-acre redevelopment area is recommended to be rezoned under a plan by the board. Under the plan, the area would be divided into three zones: Core, Gateway and Edge.

Also Tuesday, the board sent the plans for the smaller hotel proposed by partners Kevin Keough and Stan Sikora to city planning staff for advice.

"We have one last piece to fill in the entire lot to get the parking structure we need to build," Keough said. "It is not for additional profit but to bring the project's parking to where it makes sense to do it."

The board supported the project at 1306 E. Cape Coral Parkway but thought that here might be a better way to plan it. The idea was to get public parking in return for redevelopment agency financial support without depriving other businesses of their parking.

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The staff's comments on the hotel and parking building would be brought back at the board's next meeting Feb 28.

The city already has 350 rooms, according to a study done by Bill Way & Associates for Chicago developer Tom Cirrincione's RTS Inc. He plans to build a condominium hotel in his Piazza di Venezia project between Tarpon Court and Coronado Parkway.

Add the almost-ready-to-open Hampton Inn & Suites 74 rooms to the proposed 224 condominium hotel units and the possible 73-room boutique hotel and that pretty much doubles the rooms for rent in the city.

Because there is another 184-condominium-hotel complex planned at Tarpon Marina, the city's room total could surpass 900 in a few years. Condominium hotels have contracts to rent out the condos when the owner isn't there.

All other services, such as room service and baggage handling, are the same as at a normal hotel.

Because more than 5,000 rooms are located in Fort Myers, Cape Coral would begin to take its own bite of the tourist and business traveler pie.

Board members have consistently said they are trying to build a thriving downtown with walking areas, movies, live theater, offices, residential condominiums and hotels in the redevelopment area.

In other business Tuesday, city traffic engineer Rashad M. Hanbali gave a preview of the redevelopment areas traffic study and preliminary results.

The preview outlined possible solutions to traffic congestion for the next 30 years. Possibilities included moving traffic lights to better space flow along Del Prado Boulevard, widening roads to provide alternatives to Cape Coral Parkway and widening the Cape Coral Bridge to eight lanes.

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