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Planning board endorses downtown hotel

Hampton Inn plan now goes to council

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Plans for Cape Coral's first hotel in 20 years won support Wednesday from the city's Planning and Zoning Commission.

The next stop now for the proposed Hampton Inn is to win final approval of its development plan from the city council. The public hearing for the plan and the council's vote are scheduled for next Tuesday.

The council will vote later on an economic incentive plan offering the developers \$652,000 to help finance the \$6 million project, which will add to the city's commercial tax base, create jobs and attract people downtown.

Construction is expected to start in March and be completed by the end of the year.

Plans call for a four-story, 75-room inn to be built at 619 S.E. 47th Terrace.

The project is on the northwest edge of the city's Community Redevelopment Agency's district. The hotel is the first of several major projects for the downtown area to reach this stage of approvals.

"I fully support this project. It is a very important project for the CRA to get going," said Suzanne Kuehn, director of the agency.

"It's refreshing to see it finally coming to fruition. It's the start of a lot of good things," Planning and Zoning Commission member Wally Dauffenbach said.

The hotel is designed to promote the agency's goal of creating a pedestrian-friendly and more urban-looking downtown, said Joe Mazurkiewicz, a consultant for the hotel's developers.

A wall with landscaping and an outdoor seating area along Southeast 47th Street will promote the "corridor feel" along the front, Mazurkiewicz said. The height of the building will add to the urban feeling of downtown, he said.

All of the parking will be behind the building. A hedge of ficus plants and shade trees will serve as a

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barrier between the parking lot and a residential area behind the hotel. A park-like setting with some benches will be created to manage stormwater and there will be a swimming pool with a tiki hut bar.

The possibility of noise from the hotel's tiki hut was the main concern of Planning and Zoning member Patti Martin, who abstained from the 6-0 vote of approval because she owns multi-family units behind the hotel. She wanted to know if a wall could be built on the north side of the pool area to contain the noise.

"That's where we need the help," Martin said. "Would a trellis or a fence or some kind of structure work there?" Martin asked. The ficus hedge will block the view but not the noise from her apartments that will overlook the hedge, Martin said.

There's no room to put a buffer on the north side of the pool, Mazurkiewicz said. The hedge will block the noise, too, he said.

The commissioners accepted Mazurkiewicz's position and did not recommend any changes for the pool area's plans.

In other business, the commission approved a fire station plan including a 50-foot training tower and 150-foot communications tower. The station is planned for 707 Southwest 1st St. Nicholas Parkway runs through the property, which is just east of Nelson Parkway.

The city plans to hide the complex from nearby residential areas with shade trees and a fence. The city also plans to build a sidewalk around the project as it is developed in phases.

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