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<<
[Back](#)

Agency to discuss replacing downtown sewers Lack of parking also on meeting agenda

By Pete Skiba

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Downtown Cape Coral sits on outdated, possibly crumbling, clay sewer pipes, said Suzanne Kuehn, executive director of the Community Redevelopment Agency.

The agency, which is entrusted with the rejuvenation of the downtown, plans to do something about that.

“All those clay pipes need to be replaced with PVC,” Kuehn, said. “With all the projects we will have coming in, the pipes will not be adequate.”

IF YOU GO

- What: Cape Coral Redevelopment Agency regular meeting
- When: 5:30 p.m. today
- Where: Cape Coral City Council Chambers, 1015 Cultural Park Blvd.

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A request for consultants to submit a utilities master plan to handle the design and installation of modern water, sewer and electrical systems to bring the downtown into the 21st century is on the agency's meeting agenda at 5:30 p.m. today.

The agency scheduled its meeting at 1015 Cultural Park Boulevard in Cape Coral City Hall.

Downtown Cape Coral seems on the eve of an emergence as a thriving area with places to live, work, shop, dine and pursue recreation. Developers plan more than a billion dollars in projects in the area.

The redevelopment agency has been working on plans to turn the once blighted area into a vibrant downtown.

The utility problems are among those that lead to the redevelopment agency's formation. Another one, deficient parking, is also planned to be discussed according to the agency's agenda.

Many cities, particularly those with redevelopment areas, have programs that allow developers to pay a fee instead of providing all the parking required for their building.

The fees then usually go toward building parking garages in the neighborhood that are within walking distance of the new building.

Mostly smaller projects, other than multi-acre skyline changing projects,

make use of the payment in lieu of parking program.

If a building is required to have 16 spaces, but only can afford to use space on its property for 10, the buildings owners could pay a share to have a nearby lot bought or leased and turned into a parking lot adding the eight other spaces.

“That’s the whole point to PILOP (payment in lieu of parking), to have a way to pay instead of putting parking in,” said Scott Hertz, redevelopment agency board member. “If we can get the program going it would be encouraging to smaller projects.”

The redevelopment area stretches 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.

Projects would still have a challenge to build on smaller lots and make the building economically viable. Putting up a project requires that the available space for rental in the building cover the cost of the building and have enough space for a profit.

The redevelopment agency board plans to discuss sponsoring what it terms a design competition for mixed use development.

The competition would allow for designers to show their flair for innovation in designing projects that have offices and residential spaces and maybe also retail shops. The competition’s rewards would also be up for discussion at the meeting this afternoon.

<<
[Back](#)