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Cape Coral CRA looking to ease downtown traffic flow

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City officials are hoping to change the way traffic moves through downtown. And some see south Cape Coral's grid of narrow alleyways as the key.

The Community Redevelopment Agency is looking to spend up to \$132,000 to repave a test alley behind the Sportsman Yacht & Sailing Club on Southeast 47th Street. The hope is to use alleys to access parking behind businesses and push the storefronts closer to the sidewalks. Along with streetscapes, landscaping and private investment, CRA's leadership hopes to get people out of their cars and on their feet.

"People are running through here like it's US (Route) 41," said Anderson, looking through the plate glass windows at Corporate Art on Southeast 47th Terrace. "If they're trying to find me, they'd have a hard time."

Few cars stop, Anderson said. Those that do, park in front of their destination. No one walks. No one finds Anderson's store unless they're looking for it. It's easy to see why, Jacobsen said.

In much of Cape Coral, walking down the street puts a pedestrian on a "ribbon of sidewalk" between a parking lot and a line of fast-moving traffic.

"The reason no one walks in suburban neighborhoods is it's dangerous and not fun and ugly," Jacobsen said.

The new plan is to put parking lots behind businesses while leaving some parallel parking as a buffer between street traffic and pedestrians. Those rear parking lots require access. That's where the alleys come in.

"We chose that alley," said CRA director John Jacobsen, "because it had almost every problem we've ever had in a CRA alley."

The alley is narrow — 15-feet - and boxed in by power lines. The CRA will use the money to take down power lines on one side of the street and work with property owners to pave an additional 2.5-feet on either side.

"There's been a debate forever about changing the traffic patterns," said Cape Coral Mayor Jim Burch. With the Cape Coral Parkway well-established as a traffic thoroughfare, thoughts of pedestrian friendly streets have turned north to Southeast 47th Terrace and Southeast 47th Street.

"The alleyways," Burch said, "could facilitate a lot of this. That's provided we don't have major transmission lines running down the street."

The City Council Monday could vote on whether to reverse a vote allowing 75-foot-tall high-voltage power lines to run down Southeast 47th Terrace. The presence of power lines, Burch said, would make alleyways irrelevant.