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[Back](#)

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Cape rejuvenation tabled

Planners express need for input from council

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After updated plans to rejuvenate downtown were rejected Tuesday, a Cape Coral official said the efforts would continue.

The city's Planning and Zoning Board rejected the plans, 4-2, with Eugene Wolfe, the chairman, saying the agency that drafted them was trying to become autonomous.

The Community Redevelopment Agency "is a good board and they have some great ideas. Buildings going up six and 12 stories with stores on the bottom is excellent," Wolfe said. "The idea is for them (the redevelopment agency) to work with the City Council and not act autonomously."

The two boards plan to meet in two weeks to discuss the plan and the building codes that go with it.

The basic idea to establish a downtown where people will live, work and find recreation was not threatened, Wolfe said. Any problems with traffic, parking and finding water and sewer capacity for increased residential growth could be worked out, he said.

A key focus of the plan is to increase the number of homes in the area from 2,027 to 11,126, mostly in the form of condominiums in midrise buildings.

But some on the planning board believed the redevelopment agency's updated plan removed itself from much of the city's supervision.

Board members Steve Cristaldi and James Ranfranz voted to accept the amended plan. Cristaldi said the redevelopment agency should be more free of what he called city "bureaucracy."

"One of the reasons we are doing a CRA is so that we can finally have a downtown," Cristaldi said. "It will mean people will have places to park their cars and walk. I voted to recommend the plan and move the process along. We need to move forward."

The planning board and the redevelopment agency scheduled a joint workshop for 5:30 p.m., Sept. 14, in the former Waterford Ballroom, now La Venezia.

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"We are pro-development," Wolfe said. "We just want to make sure it is done the right way and the city has its hand in it."

<<
[Back](#)