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Codes OK'd to revamp downtown

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Cape Coral took a significant step toward what some call a real downtown Tuesday.

The Cape Coral Planning and Zoning Commission gave its approval of building codes for the Community Redevelopment Area where people can live, work, shop and dine.

At their regular 9 a.m. meeting, members approved the building codes by a 6-1 vote. Walter Fluegel voted against.

Fluegel said that as written, the codes do not require commercial development in the area.

Several projects already proposed for the area have offices, condominiums, retail stores and even a movie theater in their plans.

Other planning commissioners thought it was time to get on with the codes. Problems could be ironed out as they arose, they said.

"I think that it was time to move the building codes along. We don't have a real downtown," Commissioner Steve Cristaldi said. "This way we can have a downtown worthy of the city."

Commission members added two conditions to their recommendation. A task force would review the codes annually and larger developments would face Planned Development Project rules. If a development planned more than 20 units on an acre, it would go through the more lengthy review and approval planned development project process.

The process has more paperwork and planning staff review involved.

The recommended codes would increase the number of residences allowed in the Community Redevelopment Area from 2,027 to 11,126.

Under the new codes, the downtown would be divided into three zoning districts each with its own height limitations — gateway: 12 stories; edge: six stories and core: six stories.

The gateway zones would be at either end of the redevelopment area as it stretches from the Cape Coral Bridge along Cape Coral Parkway a block past Tudor Drive. At the cross of Del Prado Boulevard, an edge zone would extend north to Southeast 44th Street.

The core area extends from Southeast 15th Avenue to Candida Street.

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Farther west, it would have edge and gateway zones at its ends.

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