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## Downtown Cape developers form group to address

shared concerns; Mayor ponders if council should take on CRA duties

By **DMITRY RASHNITSOV**,  
[drashnitsov@breezenewspapers.com](mailto:drashnitsov@breezenewspapers.com)

Tired of running into the same large-scale problems, a group of downtown developers is bonding together to overcome some of the hurdles facing the reformation of the city's center.

A recent meeting resulted in the creation of the Cape Downtown Developers Alliance with goals of addressing transportation, stormwater and utilities infrastructure improvements, Tax Increment Financing support from the Community Redevelopment Agency and educating the CRA board of directors about the need for public sector investment to attract private sector dollars.

"This committee will not go on forever," said CDDA spokesman Joe Mazurkiewicz. "We will only stay together until projects start coming out of the ground."

Members of the CDDA include representatives from the downtown projects of Cape Villagio, Cape Vincent, Coronado Terrace, Del Prado Boat Club, Lee Plaza Two, Paradise Resort Hotel, Piazza di Venezia, Sixteenth Place Offices, Venetian Towers I & II, Village Square and Bimini Beach Development — totaling more than \$1 billion in investments.

Mazurkiewicz said developers did not realize they were all running into the same issues until they met up to discuss them.

"I see us initially having a meeting with the city manager and mayor



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and CRA director and if stuff starts moving we may not have to do anything at all, but if stuff doesn't start moving we may have to dig deeper and meet with city council members and individual members of the CRA board of directors," Mazurkiewicz said.

CRA Executive Director Suzanne Kuehn said it is a brilliant idea for the developers to create a unified front.

"They want to create this vision of a community and with common ground all of these things that need to be resolved before the projects are complete can get there faster," Kuehn said.

Cape Coral Mayor Eric Feichthaler said the formation of the group is a good idea, but the problem may be that the CRA is lagging behind in getting projects off the ground.

"I think it's a good cause. Nothing has come out of the ground except the Hampton Inn in the last 20 years," Feichthaler said. "They have a good reason to bind together."

The mayor said he started questioning the judgement of the CRA after its board of directors' recent vote to help purchase the Sunset Towers condominiums even after residents have continuously said they would prefer to rebuild and not sell the Hurricane Charley-ravaged property.

Feichthaler said the CRA might be better as an advisory board, with council making final decisions on matters the CRA currently votes on.

"Some developers have even said the director has impeded the progress of the downtown," Feichthaler said. "The people of Cape Coral deserve better. What disagreements there are between the CRA and staff will be eliminated."

Feichthaler said he is currently researching options, and the council will probably discuss the future of the CRA sometime next month.

For now Mazurkiewicz said his group will look into what other CRAs are doing across the state and work with the council to give the downtown projects a swift kick towards construction.

"The city council has to tell the city attorney and city staff that the CRA is a high priority and we need to run it through," Mazurkiewicz said.



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