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Paths key link in CRA plans

Bikeways to cover fiber-optic cables

By Pete Skiba

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If all goes well, pedaling, walking and cruising along fiber-optic highways could all take the same paths in the heart of Cape Coral.

The city's downtown redevelopment proposals include a combination bicycle path and walkway with fiber-optic cables under the ground.

When the concept moves beyond the planning stage it would link many of the 14 projects either newly constructed or planned to be built in the 432-acre Cape Coral Redevelopment Area.

In concept, the downtown area would develop into a thriving residential and business area where people would not need their cars.

"It will be a passive way to get around the city core," said Rich Greer, owner and broker of Golden Horizon Mortgage Inc. in the city. "We are working on the feasibility and outlining a plan to circle the CRA with a bike path and then run paths into the developments."

Greer heads up a group loosely named the bicycle path committee or the broadband initiative, depending whether the committee member spoken to is a bicyclist or a technology company employee. The volunteer group meets at 10 a.m. today in the redevelopment agency office at East 477 Cape Coral Parkway.

"We already are a broadband provider in Cape Coral to 600 or 700 businesses and thousands of residents," said Chuck Hagan, Time Warner Cable Southwest Florida director of sales and marketing.

"The idea is to get broadband infrastructure in place so that someone can download a movie at the Piazza di Venezia, play music or place an

MEETING

- What: Bicycle path, broadband initiative meeting
- When: 10 a.m. today
- Where: Community Redevelopment Agency office. Suite 108, 447 East Cape Coral Parkway
- Why: Planning for bicycle paths and fiber-optic cables to run through the city's downtown redevelopment area

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overseas call."

Plans call for the Piazza di Venezia on about 25 acres off Cape Coral Boulevard at Atlantic Court to feature a hotel, theaters, residential and office condominiums, restaurants and other amenities for the downtown area.

The billion-dollar project would be linked to other developments in the downtown by the bicycle path and walkway. The optic-fiber cables would also weave through the area under the pedalers and walkers above.

The first step would be to apply for state and federal grants, said Richard Orth, redevelopment agency project manager. Orth believes the redevelopment agency has a good shot at getting the funding.

It is too early in the development process to put a price on completing the project, Orth said.

The redevelopment area covers Cape Coral's downtown 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.

The other projects planned for the downtown, such as the more than \$200 million Village Square at Cape Coral Parkway between Southeast Ninth Place and Southeast Eighth Court, also feature residential and business condominiums.

The area allows for about 11,000 residences. All could connect with the forthcoming Time Warner cable or use an Embarc, formerly Sprint, company cable if they chose.

The bicycle paths over the cables could bring tree-lined paths with bark-mulch or brick paving for everyone to enjoy. A nature center on the banks of the Caloosahatchee River under Cape Coral Bridge is also part of the plan.

"The way it could be, is that someone could bike on a path and go anywhere in the downtown," Greer said. "We could even extend the paths to the Yacht Club."

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