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## Downtown business district moves a step toward reality

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Although it's not clear who's on board yet, the city approved creating a five-member steering committee as the first step toward setting up a special-assessment district in the downtown.

Assessments could be based on front or square footage of the downtown property, appraised value or another option, according to the resolution that City Council passed on March 27.

Council's approval moved last year's funding strategy into reality as a possible pool of money to pay for a shuttle or trolley system, marketing and promotion and parking. A so-called Business Improvement District would be modeled on success stories like Coral Gables and Naples.

The city's Downtown [Boca Raton](#) Advisory Committee now has to come up with five of its own members willing to serve, and they have a big job ahead of them. The new committee would have to meet a timeline to investigate the issue before bringing it before the Community Redevelopment Agency, city council members governing the downtown that meets separately.

The BID Steering Committee will have to hold meetings to generate public input and approval, see how downtown merchants and property owners feel about a BID, and shepherd them through the public process. Investments Limited, the largest property owners in the downtown, wasn't ready to comment on the issue at this time.

The steering committee will also have to set boundaries and propose exemptions for a BID, review and recommend options for costs and levies, and develop a preliminary action plan.

Funds are available in the CRA budget, and won't impact the city financially, according to city documents.

The city's advisory committee signed off on the concept in January, after city staff presented them with the BID idea on Nov. 16 and Dec. 7. "We are looking at the steering committee to reach out to property owners and businesses," the city's downtown manager Ruby Childers said in a phone interview last week.

The next step is to have the new committee openings advertised and have committee members apply to the City Clerk's office, she said. The new members will appoint a chairman and vice chairman and determine when they will meet by mid- to late April. Appointments are tentatively scheduled at the City Council's regular meeting on April 10.

"They will work on an action plan for the CRA in January," she said.

Forming one or more BIDs would require a majority of the affected property owners, Childers said in an earlier interview. She recommended a four-phase process with the first phase taking a year and subsequent phases one to two years each.

The authority to form BIDs is part of state law, Florida Statute Chapter 170.

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