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Board vows to ask what community wants to do Revitalization agency says it will be guided by its minority neighborhoods.

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Members of a new redevelopment board formed to help the city's minority neighborhoods say they will work with the community to set goals before they start spending money.

Members of the Central Community Redevelopment Agency, meeting for the first time Tuesday, agreed to hold at least three public forums in the redevelopment district before submitting its goals to the state. The tenor of the first meeting was summed up by **Cynthia Newell**, hired by Tropicana last year to lead a community "visioning" group for the CRA.

Newell told the board to keep residents in mind when deciding how to spend its money.

"When you come, speak with them and not to them," she said. "What the city did in the past is in the past. I have encouraged them not to think about the past and to leave it as history."

Although the agency has millions of dollars coming in tax revenue, that money won't be collected until December 2002.

"While we're waiting for the money to arrive, we can develop the plan and find out what the neighborhoods want," said board member and Bradenton Planning Director Jerry West.

Once the board's plan is submitted, it may borrow money to start revitalization projects.

City Attorney Bill Lisch told the board it can borrow money from the City Council more easily than from a bank. That's because the board is new and doesn't yet have a record of fiscal responsibility.

The board is getting a huge boost from \$100 million worth of new construction at Tropicana headquarters and \$60 million in federal HOPE VI funds that will be used to demolish and replace a public-housing project.

The CRA board gets a portion of the city and county property taxes collected on those projects.

The board will collect an estimated \$500,000 at the end of 2002. By 2003, it could be taking in \$1 million to \$1.25 million yearly. The money is earmarked solely for improving the neighborhoods.

The board's inaugural meeting marks a new era for the black neighborhoods of central and east Bradenton.

Neighborhood advocates have complained for years that officials neglected those areas and have not kept the standard of living as high as it is in west Bradenton.

The CRA area is bordered on the north by Ninth Avenue West and Manatee Avenue East, on the west by Eighth Street West, on the south mostly by 13th Avenue and on the east by 27th Street East.

The CRA begins to collect neighborhood input Aug. 16, when board members will tour the district and then hold a meeting at 6:30 p.m. at City Hall.

Regular meeting times are set for 5 p.m. on the second and fourth Thursdays of each month.