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By **WILLIE HOWARD**

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Posted: 8:34 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 3, 2012

Business owners interested in moving to Lake Worth are less likely to pay parking impact fees under an ordinance approved tonight by the city commission.

The ordinance eliminates the \$7,500-per-space parking impact fee for businesses that move into existing buildings in some areas of the city.

Zoning regulations require businesses to pay the city for parking spaces based on square footage. A restaurant, for example, is required to have one parking space for every 250 square feet, while a store must have one space for every 500 square feet.

The waiver applies to the "downtown core area," defined as the area along Lake and Lucerne avenues extending north to Second Avenue North, south to First Avenue South, west to A Street and east to Golfview Road.

The waiver does not apply to new construction or building expansions.

In the case of restaurants, the impact fee waiver applies only to the first 2,500 square feet - reflecting a concern of the Planning & Zoning Board that big commercial spaces converted to restaurants could create a large demand for parking.

The parking fee waiver was approved in a 4-0 vote. Commissioner Christopher McVoy was absent.

Commissioner Andy Amoroso, a downtown merchant, has been pushing to have the parking impact fee repealed for more than a year to encourage business growth in the city.

The revised ordinance will continue to bring in some impact-fee revenue for use in building future parking lots but will reduce start-up costs that discourage business owners from moving to Lake Worth, Amoroso said.

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