

Rooftop dining on Main gets go ahead

By Barbara Soderlin

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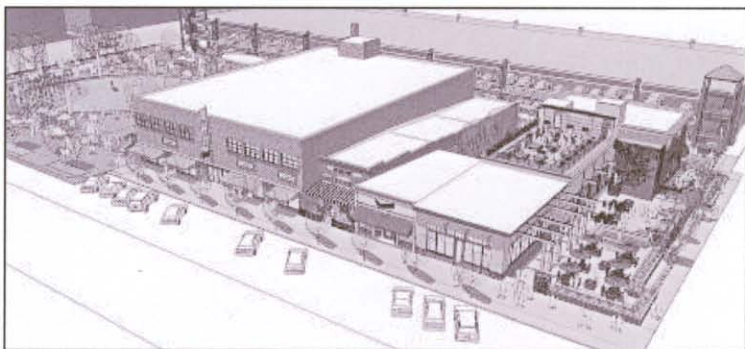
The city Historic Preservation Commission unanimously recommended on Friday allowing a rooftop dining and lounge space at 502 Main St. It would be the first rooftop dining in downtown Rapid City and the second rooftop lounge space after the Vertex club opens around Memorial Day at the top of the Hotel Alex Johnson.

Architects and a designer on the project told the commission Friday that plans minimize the visual impact that a rooftop dining area would have on the historic district. For example, a metal handrail on the rooftop will be set back 4 feet from the edge, making it less noticeable from the street.

They also said the lighting will be subdued and, while it will be obvious to drivers and pedestrians that there is activity on the roof, it won't be a circus, said commission member Shawn Krull, who abstained from voting because he is the designer on this project.

Eric Monroe of Chamberlin Architects said all the design elements fit with the size and scale of downtown buildings and are easily reversible for a future tenant's use.

Commissioners disagreed about one part of the plan — whether the design of a decorative metal piece used to screen an exterior stairway would fit in with the architectural fabric of the historic district. The black metal piece would be the height of the building with circles of different sizes cut into it, giving the effect of bubbles.



Courtesy Chamberlin Architects

The north side of the 500 block of Main Street shows a completed Main Street Square and a commercial redevelopment. The building at the corner of Fifth and Main streets will be remodeled into two restaurants, one with outdoor dining on both the rooftop and ground level.

"It's artful, and it's light, and it's airy," architect Eric Monroe said.

Commissioner Duane Baumgartner disagreed.

"Personally, I don't think it fits the property," he said. "It's decorative and it's interesting, but I just don't think it fits with the downtown."

Commissioners asked the architect to suggest other screening options at a future meeting, but they approved the concept of the roof deck, the stairs to the deck and an elevator to access it from inside the building.

The building at 502 Main St. was constructed in 1969 as Hills Tire and Supply and was most recently Native American Office Products before Ray Hillenbrand bought it last year. Hillenbrand is redeveloping the block in conjunction with the Main Street Square public plaza under construction at the block's west end. The commission makes recommendations to the South Dakota State Historical Society, which must

approve projects in the historic district before a city building permit can be issued.

Friday's vote was a big step for moving the project along, property manager Dan Tribby said, since plans to put restaurants in the front and back of 502 Main depend on installing the elevator.

But Tribby said it's too early to announce what tenants he's working with on the development. He said he needs to wait until all city permits are in place because some of the plans depend on what remodeling will be allowed.

Also leases haven't been

signed for all the restaurant and retail spaces, he said.

But he said all the tenants and restaurateurs are locals, not chains or franchises.

"The people that are involved in this, you know them and you like them," he said.

Until all the plans are in place, he said he is enjoying watching the initial phases of construction — especially demolition of the facade at 510 Main St. this week. The property for years was the Video Blue adult bookstore.

"Isn't that just nice?" he said. "That it's gone, and it's not coming back."