Fountain dampens city brand proposal

A tourism consultant urges Rapid City to make its downtown into a center for arts and entertainment.

By Dan Daly  1-9-08

Tourism consultant Roger Brooks' proposal for downtown Rapid City presented a variety of reactions around town on Tuesday. People seemed to like his idea of a public gathering place downtown, but they were a little less buoyant about a large, Bellagio-style water fountain.

Brooks' company, Destination Development, was hired by the Rapid City Convention & Visitors Bureau and area businesses to help the city create a brand identity that separates it from the other 1,500 American cities trying to become tourist destinations.

After several meetings, visits and public comments, Brooks returned to Rapid City on Monday with his suggestion: Turn downtown Rapid City into a center for arts and entertainment, and build that theme around a public square or plaza. And build a large, flashy water feature that will draw people in.

Pat Wyss, a landscape architect and past chairman of the Rapid City Area Chamber of Commerce, liked a lot of the ideas that Roger Brooks presented Monday.

"I think having a public square of some fashion is a
Downtown Brand

I generally agree with everything he says, except I don’t believe putting a (giant) fountain downtown will be conducive to retail.

— Don Perdue, head of the City of Presidents project

downtown groups and others involved in the Brooks project work out more of the details. “I prefer to let them do their work,” she said. “But I think the council will be very open to whatever suggestion that branding committee comes forward with.”

Perdue said in downtown Rapid City, said a lot of the consultant’s ideas were not new.

As Roger Brooks himself said, they’ll tell us anything we didn’t know already, but he told it as an outsider, which in fact more people — for whatever reason — will listen to it,” Purdse said with a chuckle.

Perdue agrees that downtown Rapid City needs more shopping and reasons for people to come downtown.

I generally agree with everything he says, except I don’t believe putting a (giant) fountain downtown will be conducive to retail,” he said. Pursue said he had heard such a fountain could cost as much as $14 million.

Chris Johnson of the Clock Shop in downtown Rapid City said it was too soon to tell which direction the Roger Brooks’ branding process will go. A lot of work, and a lot of decisions, are yet to be made.

I generally agree that people are skeptical: We’re midway through the process,” Johnson said Tuesday. “I think in the end, we will come up with something. There’s a lot of jockeying around for position right now.”

He supports the overall effort to bring new excitement to the downtown business district. He likes the idea of a water feature, but he has questions whether it will be a year-round venue. He would also like to see brand identity that is more specific than arts and entertainment.

But Johnson believes all that will come, and as people work out the details, they will see how the project is standing by the edge of the pool, and nobody wants to jump in,” he said.

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