Questions and answers on the BID

By Barbara Soderlin and Emilie Rusch
Journal staff

The downtown Business Improvement District has, until now, been mainly an issue for downtown property owners.

But on June 29, voters throughout Rapid City will have the chance to weigh in on the issue. If you, like many outside downtown, haven’t been paying attention as the issue has unfolded over the past two years, here’s a primer to help you get ready to cast your vote.

What’s at stake June 29?
Voters will decide whether to approve or deny an ordinance the city council approved April 5 creating the Business Improvement District.

What’s a Business Improvement District?
It’s a special taxing district in which revenues go to support specific projects.

How much would this tax district raise?
The special assessments would raise about $173,700 a year, based on 2009 property values.

Where would that money go?
Initially, income from the tax district would fund the operation and maintenance costs for Main Street Square, a $6.5 million year-round public plaza planned for the city-owned parking lot at the corner of Sixth and Main streets. Over time, organizers hope the plaza will become self-sufficient, freeing up BID funds for other district-wide downtown improvement projects.

Who proposed the improvement district?
Destination Rapid City, a non-profit economic development corporation. It was formed in 2008 by downtown developers to execute projects that would revitalize downtown. Many of the ideas came from a report from tourism consultant Roger Brooks, who first suggested a public plaza as the centerpiece of a dining and entertainment district.

Who approved the BID?
The Rapid City Council voted 10-0 on April 5 to create the downtown tax district.

Why should I support the downtown BID?
Supporters say: The BID is needed to make the Main Street Square public plaza a success; the plaza will be a gathering place for tourists and locals; it will help revitalize downtown; it won’t cost homeowners anything; and it will help drive increases in city sales tax revenues.

Why shouldn’t I support the downtown BID?
Opponents say: Downtown business and property owners can’t afford an extra tax; the tax structure is unfair; some say the park is unnecessary and will eliminate needed public parking spaces.