

Proposed parking plan a good start on a downtown problem

THE ISSUE:

Parking shortages in downtown Rapid City

OUR VIEW: A

proposed parking plan is an innovative solution to a longstanding problem.

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Parking complaints are at least as common as presidential statues in downtown Rapid City. Certainly, our parking problems have been around a lot longer than the popular public art has been.

Customers of businesses on St. Joe and Main streets have trouble finding short-term parking spots for a quick shopping trip. Patrons who need more than a two-hour time limit to enjoy a meal, watch a movie or get a beauty treatment are infuriated by the \$5 parking ticket that often awaits them on their windshield.

Luckily, the downtown revitalization committee has been listening to those complaints. In response, it has produced a parking plan that juggles time

limits and varies parking fees in a six-block by eight-block downtown area in an effort to free up more downtown parking by tailoring on-street parking to the specific needs of customers and employees.

The plan uses a carrot-and-stick approach to encourage downtown employees to park on the periphery of downtown, where 10-hour meters will cost them just pennies per hour. It also discourages employees from taking the free, non-metered parking spaces in the downtown core. Under the new plan, getting a parking ticket in the nonmetered spots coveted by customers would be considerably costlier than the current \$5 ticket.

We like much about the plan

and think it is an innovative approach that will address the needs of downtown business owners, their employees and, most importantly, their customers. Even the upfront cost of \$600,000 to install meters is an investment that will pay for itself in one year and begin to produce additional city revenue after that.

No doubt the plan isn't perfect, most notably in addressing the parking needs of library patrons. But there's still time for tweaking the plan through public input to the revitalization committee before the city council votes on the proposed plan.

Kudos to the revitalization committee members for their hard work on addressing this longstanding problem.