

# Parking structure changed

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■ Downtown ramp plans modified to accommodate third level in future.

By Heidi Bell  
Journal Staff Writer

Rapid City's downtown parking ramp is being designed to eventually accommodate three stories, although the initial building project will involve only two levels.

Architect Gene Fennell of Lund & Associates reported that change to the Rapid City Council's Legal and Finance Committee Wednesday in an update on the parking ramp design.

The original plan was to cap the ramp at two levels. Community Development Director Bonnie Hughes said city officials later decided that was shortsighted and there should be an option for future expansion.

After several meetings with city engineers, traffic staff, downtown merchants, historic preservationists and others, Fennell said some basic decisions have been made.

There will be no "retail involvement" on-site, he said. Access will be two-way through the alley. The focus will be on making the east- and west-facing ends of the structure fit in with nearby historical buildings.

Fennell said preliminary geotechnical studies indicate some costs could be less than expected. It was originally estimated that pilings would have to be sunk about 35 feet into the ground, but 20 to 25 feet may be sufficient.

Bids will be let in the next couple of months, and construction is expected to be done by late fall.

An open forum on the project is planned from 4:30 p.m. to 6 p.m. on Thursday, Feb. 5, in the first-floor Community Room at the City/School

Administration Center, 300 Sixth St.

Also on Wednesday, the committee heard an update on operations at the Rapid City Public Library.

Library Director Kathy Fredette said circulation was at an all-time high in 1997, with more than 500,000 items checked out. Last year's summer reading program drew a record 1,350-plus participants. Visitation was at almost 400,000.

Patrons saw the start of the "library of the future" in 1997, Fredette said. More information, from census records and telephone listings to complete magazine articles, is now available online and on CD-ROM.

Using city funds as matching money, the library has received several matching grants for technology upgrades such as computers and network installation, Fredette said.

"We believe these are improvements that will be well-liked and much-used," she said.

Fredette also reviewed recent changes at the library. Copier fees have been increased so that service is now self-sustaining. Nonresident fees have been raised to \$50 per household to help pay costs, and student cards have been eliminated.

Overdue fines have gone up. Also, library hours have been cut to save money and maintain good service.

Fredette said there are still staffing, funding and long-range planning issues that need to be addressed.

Also on Wednesday, Mayor Jim Shaw said a South Dakota Department of Transportation official had informed him that 3M, the company that made the reflective lane-marking tape used on West Highway 44, has agreed to replace tape scraped off by state and city road crews.

Much of the tape — which cost about \$1 per linear foot to buy and install — was torn off during snow removal earlier this month. 3M will replace the tape at no cost.