Group forms to improve downtown

Downtown Rapid City hasn’t suffered from the urban blight that has befallen many cities. There are still many stores and businesses that bring people into the downtown area to shop and work. But a group of citizens believes the city’s downtown district can be better and has formed a group to study ways to make working, visiting and living in downtown Rapid City an even better experience.

The tentatively titled Rapid City Downtown Empowerment District Task Force has met a couple of times to begin work on brainstorming ways to improve the downtown area. The group has the support of Mayor Jim Shaw and several city aldermen.

Dennis Halterman of St. Joe Street Factory is one of the task force leaders and has been busy contacting people to gather more support. Last week, he e-mailed the task force’s draft “manifesto” to task force members and interested parties.

Halterman says the group wants to help the downtown area realize its potential by giving people more reasons to visit downtown. “We want to make downtown a destination point,” he says.

Right now, the task force is forming various subcommittees to examine particular concepts, such as transportation, parking, development and city ordinances that prevent some uses of downtown. Halterman says he hopes the whole community of Rapid City gets involved in the task force’s goal of creating a better downtown area.

Rich Baumann of Neugebauer’s Jewelry says it’s important to explore ways to improve and beautify the city’s downtown. He says the new group will go beyond the promotional aim of the United Downtown Association, which markets the downtown area with such events as the annual Parade of Lights and Crazy Days. Dan Tribby of Prairie Edge also supports the new downtown group. “Anything you can do to improve the downtown is worthwhile,” he says.

The formation of the downtown task force is a good idea that we hope will succeed in coming up with more good ideas that keep Rapid City’s downtown area a vibrant place for visitors and residents alike.