

# Addition would not trim library parking

■ Proposed expansion would be built above the existing parking lot.

By Diane Rietman  
Journal Staff Writer

Building an addition above its parking lot instead of taking away existing parking space is being proposed by Rapid City Public Library officials.

The unique addition would nearly double the library space and would provide needed space for youth programs at the library, they said.

In recent years, limited space also meant less access to programs. Some children were turned away from library programs because interest exceeded available room at the library, library Director Greta Chapman said.

Library officials want to keep the facility at its current location at Quincy and Seventh streets.

Chapman's proposal would turn the existing parking lot into a covered lot similar to the bottom level of the city's parking ramp on Sixth Street. The ad-

dition would be built over the parking lot similar to the Pennington County Courthouse addition on St. Joseph Street.

The proposed addition would provide 21,000 square feet for youth services, would free space in the existing library for other programs and would preserve the existing city parking lot, she said.

The existing 28,400-square-foot library has limited space available for study or reading, with a total of 25 chairs, although it is serving a youth population of 15,013 based on the 1990 census.

The current city public library was built 27 years ago, and six remodeling projects have gotten the maximum use out of the existing space.

"Historically and for the future, providing public library space for our youth is an essen-

tial role to the health of our city," Chapman said. "The library is committed to providing services to youth of all ages. However, a limited amount of space is available for adequate seating, programming and collections."

A study committee will examine the option and need to expand the existing library. Volunteers for the committee can contact Chapman at 394-4171, ext. 216 or gchapman@sdln.net.

Since 1993, the Library Board of Trustees has compared library space needs of cities of the same size.

Funding for the project could come from private donations or possibly Vision 2012 funds, which is a special half-cent city sales tax reserved for capital improvements. The fund generates approximately \$6 million annually. The addition will be proposed during hearings starting in January on the next five-year 2012 plan.

Library officials haven't looked at staffing needs, saying space is the existing problem. If additional staff is needed, it may be minimal, Chapman said. The library employs the equivalent of 29 full-time people.

Between 1972 and 1999, the amount of

materials checked out has increased 92 percent, from 224,181 items to 430,220 books and other materials. During that same time period, attendance at library programs increased by 282 percent, from 2,512 in 1972 to 9,616 in 1999.

"In order to keep pace with our information age, the pursuit of personal and professional interests of all ages, especially our youth and elderly population, we must include adequate city library space," Chapman said. "There is a need to improve community space to encourage reading and access to information in a variety of formats and technologies."

Electronic technology has expanded use of the library. The online library catalog has been used 76,614 times so far in 1999. Library patrons have logged on to computers for 25,967 hours, and the library Web site has had 52,420 hits (access by computer) this year.

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— Greta Chapman,  
director of Rapid City Public Library

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