

# Steps to the BID election

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Here is a chronology of events over the last two years leading up to the BID election set for next Tuesday.

1989:

June 16: A group of downtown merchants represented by the Downtown Development Corp. wanted to raise money to improve the downtown by creating a special assessment district to tax downtown businesses. The area would be called a Business Improvement District, or BID.

June 27: A second public meeting on the BID proposal drew a mixed response, but it was more subdued than an earlier meeting in which the BID proposal was attacked by a number of downtown merchants.

Nov. 16: BID proponents got ready to take their proposal to the Common Council. But BID opponents said most downtown merchants opposed it. The BID proposal, rather than uniting the downtown, had divided it more than ever, they said.

Nov. 29: A Common Council committee listened to more than three hours of debate about the merits of the BID. (Long debates are typical whenever the BID issue comes before the council.)

Dec. 6: The Common Council approved the first steps in creating the BID. But it also appointed a 21-member board, chaired by Paul Strassels, with an almost even division of pro- and anti-BID members, to try to reach a consensus on a BID plan.

1990:

March 29: The interim BID board had unanimously recommended approval of the revised BID plan. Results of a straw vote of downtown merchants on the plan were announced today: 138 in favor and 128 against the BID. The election was called a "stunning victory" by pro-BID forces.

June 4: The Common Council approved the ordinance to create the BID. One BID opponent told the aldermen who voted for it to "go to hell."

June 14: Downtown merchants elected the first 25-member board of directors to administer the BID.

July 14: BID opponents circulated petitions and the BID ordinance had been referred to a vote of Rapid City residents. But BID supporters now had filed a lawsuit to stop the July 24 election, saying almost one-fourth of the signatures on the petitions were invalid.

July 17: A 7th Circuit judge threw out petitions referring the BID ordinance to a citywide vote, finding that 549 signatures were invalid. BID supporters said it was time for all of downtown to work together, but BID opponents said, "We're not going to lie down."

July 23: The BID Board of Directors adopted the name Downtown Development Commission. It hired Bryan Schnell, the executive director for the Downtown Development Corp., as executive director for the Downtown Development Commission.

Aug. 27: Schnell resigned. He said he needed a change and that fresh

blood would be good for the DDC.

Aug. 29: BID opponents told a Common Council committee the BID assessment notices they received were illegal. BID proponents said they were tired of defending the BID against a handful of dissidents who wanted to destroy the BID.

Sept. 6: The deadline for paying the BID tax, but so far the city had collected less than half of what was due. BID opponents said that proved just how unpopular the BID was with the people who had to pay it.

Sept. 18: The Common Council approved a one-time grace period (until Sept. 28) for late BID payments without having to pay a late penalty. BID opponents said the grace period was unfair.

Sept. 25: Lon Rempher was named interim director for the Downtown Development Commission.

Sept. 29: The good news was downtown businesses and property owners took advantage of a grace period for late BID payments, which ended yesterday. The amount of money now collected rose to more than 75 percent. The bad news was that even with the grace period, nearly one-fourth of the money due was still delinquent.

Oct. 1: The city attorney told the Common Council anti-BID forces had filed suit against the city in 7th Circuit Court asking that their BID tax money be refunded.

Oct. 15: The Common Council set a special citywide election for Dec. 4 on a pair of initiated ordinances that would repeal the BID and the tax on the district.