

Council's parking rate cut gives downtown shoppers more space

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The Rapid City Common Council's decision to lower rates at two downtown parking lots will create more space for shoppers to park their cars, said Lon Rempher, interim director of the Downtown Development Commission.

"It's a good Christmas present for downtown merchants," he said.

The council gave final approval Monday night, and new rates went into effect Tuesday.

The move involves the parking lot near the South Dakota Stockgrowers Association office at Fifth and St. Joseph streets and a lot just south of the City/School Administration Center.

People parking their cars in those lots will pay \$10 a month or \$25 every three months. In other city-owned parking lots downtown, the rate is \$20 a month or \$45 per quarter.

Rempher said the two lots were less than half full. The two contain 127 parking spaces.

He recently surveyed 350 downtown merchants and found the major concern was customer parking. Rempher said he asked the city for 350 free parking spaces and was turned down.

Community Development Director Bonnie Hughes instead suggested lowering long-term rates for under-used parking lots, Rempher said.

The council agreed to try the plan

for six months.

"Employees and employers can't afford not to use these city parking lots at this reduced price," Rempher said.

Downtown shoppers will benefit because they have more parking, and it is up to the downtown business community to open up the street spaces, he added.

Most on-street parking in downtown Rapid City is free and limited to two hours. Longer-term, metered parking is available away from the downtown core, and the city maintains several lots for long-term lease parking.

For more information about the parking spaces, contact the city Finance Department at 394-4143.