

BID board takes up master plan at 1st meeting

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A master plan for business growth and downtown aesthetics were the highlights of the Business Improvement Board of Directors' first meeting since the BID went into effect.

Monday, board members were given a glimpse of the future through architects' renderings of what the downtown would look like if the proposed master plan was enacted. The plan, the result of 2½ years of work by the Downtown Development Corp. and the city, goes beyond reconstruction of Main and St. Joseph streets.

According to Bryan Schnell, redevelopment director with the Downtown Development Corp., when reconstruction of the city's two main downtown streets was being planned, the corporation saw it as the perfect time to address the parking problems and other aesthetic improvements.

The result is a comprehensive plan that calls for construction of open air plazas for shoppers, parking garages and enhanced pedestrian crosswalks. The ultimate implementation of the plan will depend on finances and business recruitment.

The city plans to let bids for the reconstruction of Main Street in November 1991, with work to begin the following May. In the fall of 1992 bids will be let for the second phase, reconstruction of St. Joseph Street.

Schnell said the proposal was for parking garages at Sixth and Main streets, Seventh and Rapid streets, and by Norwest Bank, across from the YMCA. But these areas would not have a typical parking garage.

"Each would have a plaza-like area," Schnell said. The plaza area would include water fountains, bench seating and plantings, and possibly public restrooms. At least one plaza would have a band shell, which

would bring entertainment to the downtown, while increasing business.

Lining the plaza would be ground-floor retail shops and restaurants to attract lunchtime crowds. Public parking would be provided underground and above the stores. The plan is to top off the garage with professional offices.

"It would give us employees, jobs and parking spaces downtown," Schnell told the board. He said the key was to attract the businesses to fill these buildings. "It will not happen overnight."

The plan also calls for some widening of sidewalks and enhancing the overall appearance of the downtown by planting trees and other shrubbery and adding decorative lighting. In addition, pedestrian crosswalks would be enhanced by installing textured concrete in the areas that are now marked by paint.

Angle parking from Fifth to West Boulevard would be retained, but the proposal is to make the parking from East Boulevard to Fifth Street parallel. Parking on downtown side streets would be angle, but the angles would be sharper, going from 45 degrees to 60 degrees. Schnell said that would add an average of four more parking stalls per block.

If the plan is approved, parking would be eliminated along the north side of Fifth Street and a bike path put in. The bike route would be an extension of the path already in Memorial Park and would run from Omaha to Kansas City streets.

Although the master plan is still in the planning stages it will be presented to the Rapid City Common Council for final approval sometime this fall. Schnell said people should look at the plan while it was still preliminary. It will be available for review Monday, following the common council meeting in the City/School Administration Center.