

Meeting draws opposition to parking plan

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Business people and property owners who attended a meeting Monday night were overwhelmingly opposed to changing diagonal parking to parallel parking on Main Street from Fifth Street to East Boulevard.

Opponents of the change said many drivers weren't very good at parallel parking and wouldn't want to attempt it. They said parallel parking would cut the number of Main Street parking spaces, which would cost them customers and tenants.

The consultants hired to prepare a downtown master plan said parallel parking would better allow for landscaping and other improvements that would beautify downtown and make it a more comfortable place.

They acknowledged that switching to parallel parking would eliminate 30 percent to 40 percent of the Main Street parking spots. But they said those parking spots could be made up by increasing the angle of diagonal parking on side streets.

The meeting, which attracted about 50 people, was called by the Downtown Development Corp. to discuss the portion of the master plan that

specifically concerns traffic and parking. Consultants said they wanted to hear what people thought of their proposals for future development.

Consultant Bob Leigh of Leigh Scott Clary, the firm designing parking for the downtown master plan, said parking downtown overall was adequate but there were problem areas. What people perceive about downtown parking is as important or more important than the realities of downtown parking, he said.

"If they don't have the convenience and comfort of adequate parking, they come away with the feeling that something is wrong," Leigh said.

Several of the people said they wanted to see landscaping and other forms of beautification. But nearly all those who attended opposed changing the parking.

Another meeting on the proposed master plan will be held in about a month. Downtown Development Corp. Executive Director Bryan Schnell said the master plan was still evolving. The final version of the plan probably will go to the Rapid City Planning Commission and the Rapid City Common Council in November for a vote.