

# Downtown workshop takes up parking, lights

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Multi-use parking garages, more trees, improved sidewalk lighting and parking changes were the focus of a public workshop Saturday on how to improve the use and appearance of the Rapid City business district.

Other workshops will be held as downtown business and property owners study what changes might be made when Main and St. Joseph streets — the city's main business arteries — are reconstructed, said Bryan Schnell, redevelopment director for the Downtown Development Corp. (DDC).

The state is going to turn over maintenance of the two streets to the city. The plan includes replacing the asphalt surfaces with concrete, which the state Department of Transportation said would last for 50 years, Schnell said.

Consequently, the DDC wants to identify existing problems "and try to find solutions for as many as we can," he said.

"Maybe we can't afford, for example, all the tree plantings or lights now, but we could put the wiring in underground and make the cutouts for the trees and put in the plumbing for restrooms. It's just being ready for it."

A master plan calls for bids to be received in November 1991 and reconstruction to start in 1992 on Main Street, with the St. Joe work to follow about a year later, Schnell said.

The DDC is now "in the master planning process, seeing all the opportunities we have to handle parking changes, traffic changes, landscaping and aesthetic improvements — signage, relocation of power lines and other utilities.

"Those are the types of things we want to look at in the master plan, and how the disruption will affect business people downtown."

Schnell stressed that current planning is "just going through the talking stages, and we want to involve as many people as possible so nobody can come in at the last minute and say, 'I never had a chance to say anything.'"

The DDC met Saturday with officials of DHM, a Denver consulting firm that unveiled preliminary concepts for the business district.

Those concepts include maintaining the current three-lane traffic on Main and St. Joe; changing from diagonal to parallel parking from Fifth Street east to East Boulevard; leaving parking "pretty much the way it is" from Fifth Street to West Boulevard; and changing the parking angle from 45 degrees to 60 degrees on several

north-south streets to create more parking spaces.

"There is no plan to close off any of the main streets," Schnell said.

Potential sites for parking garages also were discussed, including city lots at Sixth and St. Joe and Sixth and Main. One proposal involves retail shops on the ground floor, "a couple floors of parking, and office space above that," Schnell said.

Another land use is extending landscaped corner nodules to every downtown corner but reducing new models from those now on Main and St. Joe. "They wouldn't protrude into traffic as much," he said.

Also, preliminary concepts call for more sidewalk lighting, plus sidewalk trees on Main and St. Joe from East Boulevard to West Boulevard "to get a tree-lined boulevard look but paying attention to the needs for business signage."

A price tag hasn't been established because the effort is in preliminary stages, Schnell said. However, he expected that the costs would be shared by the state, city and downtown business sector.

He expected the next workshop to be held at 5:30 p.m. July 30 in the city council chambers. It will be open to the public "and especially downtown business people and property owners."