



Only a few rows of seats are left inside the Rapid Theater. The last images on the silver screen are merely shadows of the debris

dropping to the floor. The theater, 507 St. Joseph St., is being torn down to make way for a downtown

parking lot. Glen Battles has the contract to tear down the building. (Staff photo by Don Polovich)

City plans more leased parking places

Bill Harlan
Staff Writer

4-30-80

Rapid City is building more leased parking for downtown workers, but city officials are not sure how much more.

At a meeting Tuesday of the city council's Public Works Committee, city traffic engineer Sharon Johnson presented a plan for the new lot on St. Joseph Street, between Fifth and Sixth streets. Under the plan, the lot would provide 50 metered spaces and about 95 leased spaces.

But Alderman Gale Holbrook questioned whether two-thirds of the new lot should be reserved for leased parking.

Holbrook said Wednesday morning, "As it's designed now, we don't have anything to base those figures on. There should be some sort of a survey made that says, 'Yes we need two-thirds long term lease.'"

Holbrook suggested the Downtown Association survey members to see if more leased parking is needed.

Johnson said she based her plans for the lot on earlier committee recommendations and on a study done three years ago. According to that survey, the downtown area was short 600 parking spaces for downtown workers.

Anna Marie Thatcher of the Downtown Association said her

organization could poll its members to see if more leased parking is needed. She said she had relied on the earlier study in lobbying the city for more parking for employees.

Johnson said she thinks the earlier survey was accurate. Although Holbrook questioned whether enough people would sign up for the \$20 per month spaces, Johnson said Wednesday downtown workers and businesses should pay for their parking. "Somebody's got to pay for maintenance of the lots, and I think the user should pay," Johnson said.

On May 5 the city will open bids for conversion of another lot to leased parking. That lot, next to the Stockgrowers Building on St. Joseph Street, will provide 76 leased spaces. It should be complete 30 days after the bid is awarded, sometime next month.

Johnson said the larger St. Joseph Street lot might not be completed until next year. Crews are tearing down the Rapid Theater building, but Laughlin's Cleaners is still standing. Owner Wallace Olson had contested the city's offer of \$31,500 for the building. He recently settled out of court for \$85,000, according to Assistant City Attorney Mike Diedrich. Diedrich said Olson will need time to move equipment to another location.

Johnson said at least part of the lot could be ready by the Christmas season. "It might not be paved," she said. "But we have several options."

The new lot will cost about \$250,000, Johnson said. So far, the city has spent about \$1 million on land acquisition and demolition to build more parking. In addition to the St. Joseph Street property, the city bought the B&B Towing building on Fifth Street and land adjacent to it behind Baer's Furniture.

The city leases spaces for \$20 per month, or \$15 per month on a three-month lease. There is a waiting list for the lot on Main Street and Mount Rushmore Road, but a leased lot at Seventh Street is not full, Johnson said.

Clarification

Rapid City Police Detective William Egan, in a story in Tuesday's Journal, was quoted as telling the Rapid City Area Hospitality Association he suspects vehicle burglaries in Rapid City are up as much as 30 percent. Egan says he meant to say he suspects they are up 3 to 5 percent.