Group forms task force to improve downtown

Tom Griffith 10/10/85

Representatives of the city of Rapid City, the Downtown Association and the Rapid City Area Chamber of Commerce Thursday morning announced formation of task force to improve the downtown area.

The Heart of the City Task Force will develop a “comprehensive strategy designed to promote the physical improvement, stimulate the economic vitality and improve the quality of life of downtown Rapid City,” said Chairman Tom Lee.

He said the task force will assess the strengths and weaknesses of the downtown business district, “then ask how it will serve the city 20 years down the road.”

In examining the core area of downtown, the organization will identify landowners, including absentee landlords, count the number of businesses and residences in the area, conduct license plate surveys to see where people come from to shop downtown and hold public meetings, Lee said.

All landowners eventually will be contacted by a member of the task force, he added. “And frankly, we will be making some requests of them.”

The task force will also evaluate the downtown parking situation and examine existing structures. Recommendations for physical appearances of existing and new buildings will be made, Lee noted.

The task force hopes to complete its initial assessment of the downtown area within a year, Lee said.

The committee then hopes to develop short- and long-term plans for the downtown area and recommend ordinance and policy changes to the city.

A downtown development corporation may be organized and methods found to finance improvements in the business district.

“We aren’t going to get this done overnight,” Lee said. “We’re here to take a long-range look.”

“We need new ideas,” said Mayor Art LaCroix. He said one of the primary goals of the task force will be to make the downtown area attractive to businesses that otherwise might locate on the perimeters of the city. He said that may involve examining current zoning for various areas of the city.

“The objectives primarily will be in the downtown area, but they won’t be limited,” LaCroix said.