

Merchants plan survey on use of parking ramp ²⁻¹⁶⁻⁵⁴

It won't do any good to build a parking ramp in downtown Rapid City if no one plans to use it, local merchants say.

So in the next two weeks the Downtown Association will survey downtown businesses to find out how many employers and employees would be willing to lease space in a ramp.

Members of the association met with the Rapid City Common Council's Parking Ramp Steering Committee Wednesday evening to discuss possible locations for a downtown parking ramp. The ramp will be built with money from a sales tax increase narrowly approved by voters in January.

Steering committee chairman Guy Edwards asked the association to complete its survey by March 1, when an engineer for the ramp will be hired.

Among ramp locations discussed Wednesday were city-owned lots at Sixth and St. Joseph streets and Sixth and Main streets.

One person suggested studying the possibility of several smaller single-level ramps throughout the downtown area. That idea was first suggested in January by opponents of the sales tax increase.

Public Works Director Leonard Swanson said he thought a \$1 million ramp would provide about 200 parking spaces.

Mayor Art LaCroix said that would only be a start, but revenues from the ramp, whether leased to employees or used by shoppers, could eventually be used to issue revenue bonds for future ramps.

The next meeting of the ramp committee will be in about two weeks.

The City Hall Steering Committee will meet 1 p.m. Monday in City Hall.