

# Survey says parking needed downtown

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More parking spaces are needed in downtown Rapid City, no billboards should be allowed downtown and the corner nodules have wide support.

Those are findings of a survey done by the Rapid City Planning Department of merchants and residents who live and work in an area between East Boulevard and Sturgis Road and Omaha and South Streets and Canyon Lake Drive.

"The most surprising finding is the parking," said planner Ron Smith. "According to the merchants, they need more parking for employees."

Of 70 people who returned the survey (about 400 were distributed), 69 percent said more parking spaces are needed downtown. In recent years, the city and downtown merchants have worked closely together to get more off-street parking. Since 1975, about 300 spaces have been added. The city purchased land with urban renewal funds for some of the parking lots and paid for the some of the improvements by assessing downtown businesses.

Carpooling would open more spaces, Smith said. The city will use its computer to list employees who live within one mile of each other, work downtown and could car pool.

Another option is parking at the Rushmore Plaza Civic Center lot when the weather is good, but Smith agreed that idea is unlikely.

Another option, buying land for parking lots, is out because of federal cuts.

Seventy-seven percent who returned the survey said they "like" the corner nodes and 82 percent favor the pedestrian walkway that will be built this summer on Sixth Street, between Main and Omaha Streets, to connect downtown with the Civic Center. Ninety-seven percent oppose billboards in the downtown core and 77 percent want the historic image of downtown improved.

The rest of the poll asked respondents to rate the downtown area on a variety of things. The findings, based on ratings of poor, fair, good, very good and excellent, were:

42 percent said police patrols are good.

46 percent said the selections of goods are fair.

55 percent said special sale events were fair (23 percent said good).

36 percent said the parking lot locations are fair (20 percent said poor).

42 percent said traffic circulation was fair (35 percent said good).

23 percent said ease in getting downtown was very good (19 percent said good, 15 percent fair.)

43 percent said the places to eat were fair (38 percent said good).

44 percent said movies and other entertainment was fair (25 percent said good, 23 percent poor)

51 percent said the quality of business signs was fair.

55 percent said the appearance of buildings was fair (22 percent said poor, 21 percent good).

55 percent said the appearance of downtown was fair (31 percent said good).

In picking what the image of downtown Rapid City should be, 38 percent said a business center, 27 percent said a "fun place to be," 20 percent said an historic center and 15 percent said a commercial center.

The findings will be given to the city planning commission, downtown association and be available for developers, Smith said.