

LaCroix proposes smaller parking district

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Rapid City Mayor Art LaCroix unveiled his plan for solving the downtown parking problem to businessmen Wednesday morning.

From remarks by downtown merchants, the proposal was well received. And this will be the key to the success of the plan, LaCroix pointed out.

It would set up a parking district on a smaller scale than was tried before. But, LaCroix pointed out, it contains enough property on which a front foot assessment can be levied to raise \$500,000 toward purchase of two off-street lots.

By using the parking district method for raising money for the development of off-street parking, along with some city funds, it would not tie up parking meters for 20 years and even permit removal of some meters, the mayor explained.

A previous proposal to float a revenue bond to finance off-street parking would have pledged the parking meter revenues for 20 years and prevented their removal.

LaCroix said the city is in a stalemate on the parking problem and has hit a snag on the plan to buy property at Sixth and Main because the city council's decision to not buy the buildings at the corner west of the Sears lot. This decision is not in keeping with the plan approved by the Downtown Parking Board and the chamber's parking subcommittee and would mean the withdrawing of financial support pledged by some downtown merchants.

The change in concept is going to require the full cooperation of merchants and property owners downtown to be successful, he said.

The mayor's plan includes parking lots at the present site of the Bellamy building on Seventh Street and Industrial Extinguisher & Supply building on Rushmore Road.

These properties have not been purchased by the city yet, but the council has set an asking price and it is expected offers will be made soon. Money for these two properties, appraised at \$414,630 total, would come from Com-

munity Development Block Grant funds.

CDBG funds also could be used to purchase the Patton lot at Rushmore Road and Main and other city funds, amounting to about \$208,000 could be used for the purchase of the entire corner at Sixth and Main, including the buildings.

The development of the Patton and Sixth and Main lots was estimated at \$875,000 by Public Works Director Leonard Swanson.

With the city's participation in developing these two lots, the balance of \$500,000 would be raised through the front-foot assessment of those properties within the parking district.

The area to be included in the district extends from Fourth Street to Ninth Street and from the alley north of Main to the alley south of St. Joe.

Swanson estimated that an assessment of \$8 per front foot plus interest, annually over a 10-year period could raise the half million dollars to help finance the project.

LaCroix told the businessmen he in-

tends to introduce a resolution of necessity to establish the parking district to the council in December and expects to hold public hearings in January.

"If everything goes as planned, we should have the plan in effect by the fall of 1978," said LaCroix. But, he pointed out, if 51 percent of the property owners protest and oppose the parking district, the project is dead and "I don't have any other plan."

The plan outlined by LaCroix would amount to "semi-free" parking in the downtown area which would be provided not by tax dollars but through the assessment of property owners.

If the parking district is established, LaCroix said he plans to remove all parking meters outside the district and from the city-owned lots at Sixth and St. Joe and next to the Stockgrowers building and those lots would become free parking for employees and shoppers.

The mayor said meters should remain along Main and St. Joe as a deterrent to employees parking at the curb and taking space intended for shoppers.