Downtown building plans
good news to Rapid City

The future of downtown Rapid City looks a lot brighter now that plans for improving the 600 and 700 blocks of Main Street have been given preliminary approval.

The investment by local businessmen of more than $5 million in these two blocks is proof of their faith in the downtown area and should be good news to all Rapid City residents.

Pending the Rapid City Common Council's acceptance of bids for raw land on the north side of the 600 and 700 blocks, construction is expected to begin this spring on a new motel and a new bank, with other buildings in the 600 block remodeled into a new restaurant with apartments on the second floor.

Gill's Sun Inn wants to build an eight-story, 120-room motel, with a 72-car parking lot on the 700 block.

And the American State Bank plans to build new quarters at Seventh and Main, build a parking lot and renovate three existing buildings into a German restaurant, restoring the front of the buildings in accordance with historical preservation standards.

Those developments, plus the recent opening of the 1915 Firehouse Co. restaurant on the 600 block and the pending construction of the 8-story Mount Rushmore Hilton Inn at Main and Mount Rushmore Road, mean that Rapid Citians can soon take new pride in their downtown.

It's been a long time coming. Urban renewal plans for the downtown area were begun before the 1972 flood, and one of the proposed locations of the civic center then was the 600 block.

It's hard to forget the "Harney hole," the eyesore created by the removal of the Harney Hotel in 1973.

The hole was eventually filled in and things began to look up in 1975 when a study by THK Associates of Denver showed how attractive the 600 block could be with proper renovation.

The project was delayed, however, because of steps the city had to take to comply with National Register of Historic Places requirements, acquisition negotiations with landowners and litigation over land involved in the project.

The eventual success of the project can be traced back to the careful planning done for the area, and now it seems that planning money was well spent.

Full council approval is expected Tuesday night of the bids to purchase land for the motel, bank and restaurant.

We hope the matter is settled satisfactorily so downtown can soon have its new look.