Madden wants list of ‘things to be done downtown’

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Ernie Hansen is supposed to bring a list of things left to do downtown next time he meets with the Local Public Agency (LPA).

Hansen, Rapid City’s urban renewal director, explained the LPA’s options in the 600 block of Main Street at a meeting Monday afternoon.

The explanation, part of a discussion scheduled for the meeting, seemed to prompt Alderman Mike Madden to ask Hansen for a list of things the council needs to do to get the renewal going downtown.

“It’s getting harder and harder to explain to them (his constituents and other Rapid City voters) why nothing is getting done,” Madden said.

“We’ve got to proceed on working out some factors causing this thing (the renewal projects) to be held up...we can get a lot of things done while we wait (to acquire buildings),” Madden added.

The “things,” according to Hansen, include deciding whether or not to vacate an alley, whether utilities should be buried in the block, how much open space and how much off-street parking should be required in the urban renewal area and even how the face of Main Street should change to accommodate pedestrians while moving vehicle traffic.

Hansen explained that things haven’t been moving as quickly as some aldermen would like on Main Street because of requirements of the National Register of Historic Places, acquisition negotiations with landowners and a lawsuit over land involved in the projects.

And Hansen said after the meeting that he hopes “they don’t jump the gun before they at least know what the goals are...what we’re striving to do for the entire Central Business District.”

He explained that some councilmen are anxious to market some of the downtown parcels.

Madden agreed with other LPA members (who are also aldermen) that the land in the 600 and 700 blocks should be marketed in a large block.

But Alderwoman Norma Thomsen wanted to know why the 600 block couldn’t be marketed for motels or hotels.

“You need all the hotels and motels you can get in this area down here to save this downtown,” she said, referring to a consultant’s study of the downtown market area.

Hansen suggested the council and the planning staff get together for a “skull session” to help develop plans for Main Street.