Is downtown worth saving...again

Once again, and it appears this time with feeling, something is being done to organize a campaign to revive the central business district in downtown Rapid City.

Will it succeed?
Can downtown be saved?
Is it worth saving?

Answers to these questions and others about the core retail and service area of downtown are no doubt as varied as the makeup of the many retailers, employees, shoppers and landlords who populate the area on a regular basis.

First, we are eternally optimistic about the strength of the free enterprise system and the inherent ability of people to pull together for a common goal. Yes downtown has its problems, but the death knell has not been sounded. Far from that there is considerable evidence pointing to the strength of the neighborhood even without organized campaigns.

Financial institutions have invested millions in building new structures or remodeling existing physical plants. The promise of a new convention center hotel for the downtown area recently moved off center towards a construction schedule. Solutions towards parking problems, although not easy or cheap, are beginning to gel with the completion of the parking lot on the corner of 6th and St. Joe.

And now the Black Hills Association of Architects and Chamber of Commerce are spearheading this most recent drive to wrap the entire revitalization package into a workable plan. We congratulate their efforts and of those cooperating downtown people who see the obvious benefit in working together towards continuing the central business district's role as a focal point for the community.

During think-tank sessions that were held with downtown people this week, one point was made that we believe holds the key to success of the entire endeavor: A point was made to establish some sort of a realistic deadline for completion of a remodeling project. We agree this is most vital.

If the campaign drags on for years with no concrete evidence of completion then 5 or 10 or 20 years from now downtown businessmen will still be attending meetings where the only product will be agreement that "something should be done."