Citizens identify downtown priorities

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Parking, a strong image, an active business association and economic incentives were identified as priorities for downtown Rapid City at a Thursday meeting.

Attended mostly by business people from the downtown area, the meeting was one of four scheduled for people to share ideas about the development of the downtown area.

Strong feelings about downtown parking were expressed with merchants expressing differences of opinion about parking meters.

Suggestions included: a six month trial period without meters, no future parking lots planned for Main or St. Joseph streets, street parking retained on Main and St. Joseph streets, making traffic flow for vehicles and pedestrians as close as possible to the business area, control of employe parking and opposition to parallel parking.

There was agreement about creating a strong theme or downtown identification program. Most felt that downtown can remain a focal point of activity if it becomes more than just a daytime business community.

Suggestions ranged from making downtown an entertainment center, encouraging quality living areas downtown, creating a tie with civic center activities, planning small parks and passing a sign ordinance.

Several persons expressed the need for a strong downtown business association that has close ties with city government. This proposed association should consider ways to control employe parking and agree on uniform business hours.

There was also a need expressed for economic incentives to help landlords beautify buildings, provide parking and improve the streetscape.

The city could become involved with financing, stressing the importance of the historic district; and improving maintenance and cleanliness.

The Central Business District Beautification Task Force of the Chamber of Commerce planned the meetings and members of the Black Hills Architects hosted the forums.

Those in attendance at the meetings were encouraged to fill out questionnaires to help the task force define major issues and propose solutions to the problems.