

Downtown parking topic of LPA discussion

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July 13, 1977

Downtown parking was the concern of the Rapid City Local Public Agency (LPA) as it reviewed a downtown market study Monday.

The study was completed several months ago by Genge Consultants, a Los Angeles firm retained by the city to the economic potential of the 600 and 700 blocks on the north side of Main. The study was intended to determine if there is a market for the redevelopment of the urban renewal land in relation to its status as historically significant.

The initial report from the firm indicated the downtown area is a viable business community and there is a need for a hotel or motel along with other retail businesses to supplement the civic center.

The study also saw a need for off-street parking, especially if recommended steps are taken to con-

vert the sidewalks into a park-like setting.

Ernie Hansen, urban renewal director, explained a proposal to extend sidewalks out to the driving lane to provide rest areas and places for trees or hedges. There would be spaces where a car could cut out of the driving lane to unload passengers, all on-street parking would be eliminated.

This means that with already-short amount of parking downtown, loss in on-street parking would have to be made up with more off-street parking.

In addition to sidewalks jutting out from the present curb, beautification would include textured sidewalks and consolidated signing for traffic.

The Genge presentation was requested by the city council, which is considering condemnation to acquire added parking. The property in question extends west from the Sears store and warehouse in the 500 block of Main and includes buildings on Sixth Street.

Richard Goschke and Robb Swanson said they feel the city does not need all

the proposed land for parking and would approve if the buildings were left.

The condemnation question was to come before the legal and finance committee Wednesday afternoon for a review and recommendation.

Hansen said as soon as he knows how much land is going to be available in the 600 and 700 blocks of Main, and the LPA and council agree on what re-use can be made of the land, the property can be put up for sale to private developers.

One local firm has expressed interest in acquiring part of the 600 block. The American State Bank has filed a letter of intent to acquire 125 feet from Seventh Street east for a new bank building.

The LPA has had a policy of preferring to sell as a "total package" for development rather than a parcel at a time.

Harold Schmidt, while supporting the total package policy, said the city

should not discourage the bank. Perhaps another developer could include banking facilities, he surmised.

In other business, the LPA approved the price on 16 structures, including two houses and a garage on Sheridan Lake Road, and set the auction for 9 a.m. Aug. 3 in the Walt Taylor Bldg. on the fairgrounds.

The LPA also ruled that nothing more can be done for Mrs. Bessie Baldwin, a flood victim whose property west of Haggerty's was acquired by the LPA. Mrs. Baldwin received moving benefits and replacement housing payment, which can be paid only once according to Housing & Urban Development regulations.

Mrs. Baldwin has asked the urban renewal office to help her find another suitable house and increase the amount paid for her original home.

Bonnie Hughes, relocation director, said she has offered to help Mrs. Baldwin find another house, but at her own expense. This is not what Mrs. Baldwin wants, said Hughes.