Hilton called ‘critical’ to downtown revitalization

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Building of the planned Hilton Hotel at the northwest corner of Main Street and Rushmore Road is “absolutely critical” to the revitalization of downtown.

This is the opinion of David Wilcox who is preparing a report for Rapid City’s Urban Renewal Dept. Wilcox, from the Los Angeles-based firm of Genge Consultants, is half-way through a study that will recommend “what makes economic sense” in the revitalization of downtown.

The Hilton Hotel could “directly respond to needs of the civic center for a class A motor inn,” Wilcox believes.

In addition to this new structure, “the past can be capitalized on,” Wilcox emphasized. “Downtown is a book. And you can link what’s going on in restoration with the fact that Rapid is a Centennial city.” Plaques, maps and walking tours could help emphasize this historical aspect.

Other priorities Wilcox thinks will be part of the final recommendations include:

“Street dressing” which should include planting trees and sign design. “Here is a chance for immediate and tangible improvement in the city,” Wilcox said, noting this could be done by summer.

City leadership should emphasize the convenience services downtown offers including professional and governmental services as well as specialty shops. A responsible on-going support group for downtown should be established.

Through the school system, the convenience of downtown should be stressed for “the next market for downtown is today’s kids.”

A long-term plan should encourage residents to come back to downtown living. “Part of the health of downtown is to think about what can be done to make the second and third stories of the downtown buildings viable,” Wilcox said.

There should be a corridor linking downtown to the new arena so pedestrian traffic is encouraged and clearly marked, he also said.