

# Downtown merchants answer council parking challenge

By BOB FELL  
Journal Staff Writer

MAR 25 1976

A solution to providing more off-street parking downtown was offered and apparently accepted by a representative group of downtown merchants Friday

Nate Horwitz, chairman of the Downtown Parking Task Force, outlined a program of action in response to the challenge by the city council to see what the downtown business man will do to help provide additional parking, the downtown's No. 1 problem.

Horwitz explained that the task force has measured downtown properties that would benefit from three proposed lots and came up with a figure that is believed to be fair to all. He said that a voluntary assessment of \$10 per running foot be levied against all business places to raise \$200,000 over a five-year period

This, along with revenues from the

parking meters, should be enough to purchase the three lots, through the sale of bonds which would be amortized from the assessment.

He said the task force is recommending the purchase of the property at the corner of Sixth and St. Joe (which the city council already has approved), the parking west of Sears on Main and possibly the old Sweeney building at the corner of Seventh and Main.

It was reported at the meeting that the Sweeney building has been purchased privately and presently is undergoing remodeling. As an alternative, Horwitz then said that perhaps a lot could be established on the north side of the 600 and 700 blocks of Main in the urban renewal redevelopment area.

Horwitz said he felt the businessmen were nearing the goal of "doing something" in answer to city hall's challenge. He urged those present to sign

their pledges and said he hoped to wind up the solicitations in about two weeks.

Mayor Art LaCroix commended the merchants for taking part in the project by putting up a share of the money needed to get the job done.

He said the city council's attitude has changed in the last four years and now, if the downtown merchants will show their willingness to help, the city is ready to go.

Pledge forms were being passed around the room and while the mayor was speaking, it was reported that more than \$18,000 had been pledged. By the end of the meeting, the pledges totaled \$26,750, with only a handful of downtown merchants present.

LaCroix said that he hoped this is a start in the right direction for a revitalized downtown. He said that leadership in the city's growth should come from the business community with the city council serving as a catalyst.