



This is how the north side of the 600 block, a traditional "entertainment, bar, saloon, gambling row," looks now. . .

\$1.6 million 'facelift' proposed for city block

By JACK GETZ
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A \$1.6 million facelifting for the 600 block of Main Street was proposed here Tuesday.

Consultant Floyd Tanaka, representing THK Associates Inc. of Denver, Colo.; unveiled for city officials a plan to turn the block into an area of small shops, restaurants and offices.

Under a downtown redevelopment proposal drawn by his firm, the city would acquire all properties on the north side of the block from the old fire station west and resell them to a developer who would renovate some and demolish others.

The developer would restore the salvageable buildings on the block to their original appearance, more or less,

while upgrading them to meet current Rapid City building and fire codes. He would tear down several deemed unre-storable, such as those occupied by the Bronco Bar, Art's Saddlery and Palace Cafe.

Meanwhile, the city would develop the land area around the buildings into a landscaped mall, under the THK proposal. The site now occupied by the Western Auto store on Seventh Street would be cleared for a 58-space parking lot.

THK has projected the cost of such an undertaking at \$1,590,000. Of the total, according to economist Duane Pettyjohn, a private developer could invest no more than \$900,000 if he were to realize a reasonable return. More than

\$600,000 in public efforts would be needed.

The experts said some type of renovation is necessary to the survival of the central business district in Rapid City.

Making over the 600 block could, if nothing else, forestall the development of a huge shopping center complex on the edge of the city that would sound the death knell for the downtown area, they said.

Tanaka told members of the Rapid City Common Council and Rapid City Planning Commission that the structures in the 600 block were built mostly in the 1880s through the early 1900s. The newest building on the block, that occupied by the Seventh Avenue Flame Room, was built in 1937.

"It was always an entertainment, bar, saloon, gambling row," he said. "First it served the railroaders, then the miners, then, later on, the stockmen. It retains this type of character to the present day."

Three of the dozen buildings are wood frame structures posing "particular problems" in regard to restoration to meet current codes. Those occupied by Art's Saddlery and the Palace Cafe should be torn down, Tanaka said. The third, occupied by the Stockman's Bar, is historically significant and could be saved — but removed to a different site.

He said the Bronco Bar building is in poor structural condition. A stone building with a stucco finish, it would be impossible to restore.

But the old city fire station and the buildings occupied by Mr. Beef Restaurant and Studio One can be renovated, Tanaka said.

The building occupied by Rapid City Clothing and Stephenson Music Co. is "architecturally the most significant in the block." It is not included in the redevelopment project, but it could be renovated by its present owners, he said.

Under Tanaka's proposal, a vacant lot in the block would be left empty and the site occupied by the Stockman's Bar would also be vacated. New buildings would be located in place of those demolished on the west end of the block. Historical preservation guidelines would be sought in the renovation of the others.

Restoring the buildings would mean stripping them of all the "shanties, sheds and lean-tos" added since they were originally built and making their rear portions as attractive as their faces.

At least two restaurants would be located in the block. Most of the rest of the space would be occupied by small shops on the ground floor and offices on the second floor.

Tanaka said the area would be landscaped with trees and shrubs. A fountain could be built and sunken plaza areas for outdoor dining could add to the mall effect.

It remained for Pettyjohn to explain the economics of the proposal.

He said the major problem with

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. . . and this is how it would look following completion of a redevelopment plan proposed here Tuesday by THK Associates.

\$1.6 million 'facelift' plan

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Rapid City's core business district is a fragmented market place which sends some shoppers to Northgate, some to Baken Park and fewer and fewer to the downtown area.

Development of a regional shopping center would "decimate" downtown Rapid City, Pettyjohn said. The city is too small to support a regional shopping center even though a growth in population of 20,000 people can be expected by 1990.

Consolidation of businesses and retail shops would rejuvenate the downtown area, he said. The 600 block would not be conducive to large department stores, however.

"The best use of the property," he said, "would be to make it attractive to the housewife (with small retail shops) as well as to those in little business nodules."

He said a number of retail merchants already have expressed interest in the THK proposal.

Pettyjohn also offered projected cost figures and documentation for his suggestion that public funds as well as private funds would be needed for the project. He recommended that, should a block renovation project be under-

taken, one developer rather than several be given the work.

Although city officials who heard Tanaka and Pettyjohn took no formal action on the redevelopment proposal, several appeared intrigued by the plan.

Public Works Director Leonard Swanson noted that the city, under urban renewal, already has purchased all but two of the properties in the 600 block.

"We're faced with preserving those buildings, or some of them," he said. "The alternative is spending quite a bit of money and not having the opportunity to rent them."