

Proposed downtown revitalization plan draws concern for off-street parking

By **BOB FELL**
Journal Staff Writer

More than 100 downtown businessmen and interested citizens attended a chamber of commerce sponsored meeting on the redevelopment and revitalizing of the central business district in Rapid City Thursday.

But no one got up and waved a check for \$1 million to develop a proposed project to renovate the 600 block on Main designed and explained by Floyd Tanaka of THK Associates.

While Tanaka explained the THK concept for rebuilding the north side of the 600 block on Main into a plaza-like pedestrian mall with a series of small boutique shops, it was evident the downtown businessmen were also concerned about additional off-street parking.

Preceding Tanaka, Nate Horwitz outlined his proposal for providing additional off-street parking, giving priority to each of three locations and a recommendation for financing.

He suggested the city proceed with its efforts to acquire the Sixth and St. Joe corner which was formerly a service station and the parking lot adjacent.

The two properties are estimated at about \$150,000 and Horwitz suggested using the approximately \$180,000 in the city's parking meter fund to purchase

the property. This corner was his first choice because it could be acquired the quickest and would require the least work to convert to off-street parking.

Second choice was the corner at Sixth and Main west of the Sears Roebuck store. This would take time and money, he said, more than the first choice. A third choice was the corner of Seventh

average business with a 25-foot front only \$250 a year, he said. He said he felt the self-assessment would be preferable to the establishment of a parking district which Mayor Art LaCroix suggested later.

LaCroix also spoke, praising the business community for its remarkable economic recovery since the flood of 1972. The mayor said he feels the city is on the verge of a tremendous increase in the economy but cautioned that it will require the combined cooperation of all businessmen as well as the local governmental bodies.

He agreed with Horwitz on the need for off-street parking and mentioned the strides urban renewal already has taken in the downtown area. Most of the property in the 600 block on Main from the fire station west has been acquired by urban renewal.

But now the redevelopment phase needs leadership and LaCroix called upon the chamber of commerce to set up a special committee to work with the city council and the public parking board.

Milo Rypkema, chamber president, replied that the chamber is willing to cooperate and work with the city to preserve the downtown business community.

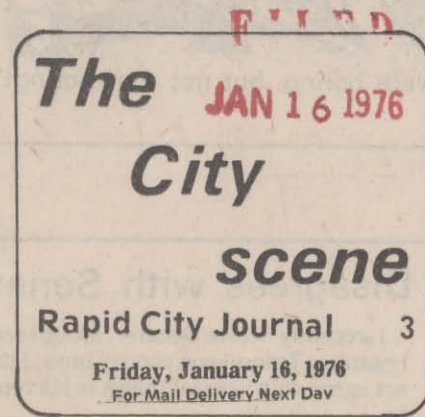
Tanaka reviewed the historical development of the 600 block of Main and explained that certain restrictions have been placed on the block because of its designation as an historically significant area.

The object of the redevelopment concept is to preserve and renovate as much as possible and that by using as many of the old buildings as possible makes the project feasible, he said.

Tanaka estimated the cost to develop the block would run close to \$1.5 million. For a private investor to take on the entire project, it would not be feasible, he pointed out. However, if the city through urban renewal or other programs would assume about one-third of the cost, a private investor could realize nearly 21 per cent return on his investment of about \$990,000.

Tanaka stressed that there would be benefits to the city for its participation in the form of greater tax revenues from a revitalized business area. He also said that renovating and remodeling the 600 block might have the effect of encouraging renovation by neighboring businesses.

In closing, businessman Bill Baron cautioned that if something is not done about the off-street parking, the downtown could lose several major anchor stores. He cited Sears and Penney's in particular.



and Main where the old Sweeney building stands.

As a method of raising additional funds for the development and maintenance of the lots, Horwitz suggested a voluntary self-assessment by businessmen, either the property owners or the renters, on a running front foot basis.

Even at \$10 a foot, it would cost the