

# Leadership needed

## on parking proposal

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Interest in the oft-discussed but never solved problem of downtown parking is again bubbling up.

This time the catalyst is a proposal for redevelopment and revitalizing of the north side of the 600 block of Main Street. Whether that improvement proceeds according to the plan outlined by the city's planning consultant depends on attracting an investor or several investors who wish to commit capital.

But regardless of whether the redevelopment takes place entirely or partially, the need for additional off-street parking in the central business district will continue to exist.

A plan to develop that parking was presented at a meeting last Thursday. It involves several elements that make it appear practical and feasible.

For one, the plan proposes using funds generated by parking meters supplemented by a voluntary assessment on businesses in the loop area.

For another, some of the property proposed for parking lots is available and can be converted rather quickly. Also, there is sufficient money in the parking meter fund to acquire at least one of the three proposed sites.

It is proposed that lots developed under the program be metered to defray acquisition and maintenance costs. Metering would mean that users would be paying for parking. However, merchants who wished to provide free parking for customers could do so through some method such as validated sales slips or by issuing meter tokens.

Although the plan sounds promising and fiscally feasible, it isn't going to become reality without work and cooperation between the business community and the city administration.

Unless owners or renters in the loop area commit to a voluntary assessment it is doubtful that sufficient funds will be available to make significant progress toward the goal.

City government must be willing to allocate as much parking meter revenue as the law allows to the project.

A note of optimism and positiveness characterized last Thursday's meeting. It should not be allowed to wither.

More dialogue, but more importantly leadership, should result in progress toward the long-sought goal of additional off-street parking.