

# Barnett wants priority put on parking district

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Mayor Don Barnett told the Rapid City Planning Commission at a special meeting Friday morning he would like the question of a downtown parking district the number one item on the commission's agenda in January.

He said the parking board wanted to know if the commission would recommend the enlargement of the Central Business District (CBD) north and east.

But he asked the commission discuss the parking question "without reinventing the wheel." He said the parking board has debated the issue and the planning commission can learn by reading of the debate.

Parking board member Roger Schneider said the expansion of the CBD would be caused by the placement of the civic center, high school and Hilton Hotel to the north and the post office to the east.

The planning commission was not receptive to such as expansion, however. The mayor summarized the opposition by saying the city has sprawled too much already "with vacant lots between."

Senior City Planner Fred Whiteface said the planning staff can provide a recommendation to the planning commission — based solely on planning criteria not economics — at the first meeting next year.

The commission did recommend Fri-

day that the "Harney Hotel Hole" be purchased for filling and immediate use as a parking lot. Commission member Gayle Holbrook opposed the measure.

Schneider said four sites with the highest priority were the Harney Hotel site, the northwest corner of Fifth and St. Joe Street, the southwest corner of Main Street and Mount Rushmore Road, and the lot west of Sears.

Earle Sutton, National College of Business, said the answer to the parking problem is a vertical parking ramp. He said expanding the CBD in the hope of finding more parking spaces wouldn't work.

He said customers are not going to walk three or four blocks to the shopping area from an outlying parking lot.

Schneider said the major problems with vertical parking facilities are the question of where they should be placed; the prohibitive cost; and the fact the space will always have to be used for parking.

Commission member Ernest Van Gerpen suggested two parking districts be created — one for the present central business district and one for the area east of the present district. The east area would contain the city hall, the courthouse and NCB, all parking congested areas.

The mayor said that was worthy of consideration.