

# Downtown group agrees on steps to spur action

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Members of the executive committee of the Downtown Improvement Group agreed Thursday to take two steps which would start wheels turning to do something about the Central Business District (CBD).

The first step is to approach the Rapid City Area Chamber of Commerce with the idea of assigning a staff member, or hiring another person, to concentrate on organizing downtown merchants and getting support for needed improvements.

Several approaches to financing the chamber staff member were discussed, but it was generally agreed any added

costs would have to come from the businessmen and property owners in the CBD.

## 'Don't have time'

Lloyd Pugh, chairman, said he will meet with the chamber's executive committee to discuss the proposal. "We, as businessmen, just do not have the time," said Pugh. "Meeting once a month, as we do, we'll never get anything done."

The other step is to have the Downtown Improvement Group review the plan for redevelopment of the CBD prepared by THK Associates, urban renewal planning consultants.

The review of the plan will be to determine if any changes should be made and then seek endorsement of the plan by the

chamber, Citizens Urban Renewal Committee and the Local Public Agency (LPA) for urban renewal.

Once the plan has been approved, the chamber staff members is to outline successive steps or phases whereby the plan can be accomplished.

## Acquisition plans

During discussion, Leonard Swanson, urban renewal director, reported on plans for acquisition of business property in the 600 and 700 blocks on the north side of Main. Presently, the entire two blocks are in the project acquisition area but, he said, he expects the LPA will remove the north halves of each block following a public hearing set for March 25.

He said appraisals are underway on the property fronting Main from Sixth to Rushmore Road. He expects they will be completed and offers can start being made in about 60 days.

## Parking or rebuilding

Use of the property, once it is acquired, was of concern to the group. Swanson explained that once the land is cleared it can be used for off-street parking, unless and until there is interest shown by private developers to rebuild. But the urban renewal department will still control any re-use of the land based on the overall plan for development, said Swanson.

Swanson also said that while the two half-blocks would be in the acquisition area, it does not necessarily mean that all the property will be acquired. Present thinking is that property will be acquired only from the fire station west as far as funds will go.

He said the urban renewal budget has about \$1 million for acquisition and relocation of businesses downtown.

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