



The half-cent question

Journal graphic/Marty Two Bulls

City plans to use tax to grow recreation

Editor's note: This is the fifth in a series of stories about projects and programs that would be funded by the proposed continuation of a half-cent Rapid City sales tax. Voters will decide whether to continue the tax, which has paid for Rushmore Plaza Civic Center and for other city improvements, at a special election Tuesday. Saturday: economic development.

By Hugh O'Gara
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Work and play go hand in hand.

One of the projects proposed for the half-cent sales tax funds is recreation, and supporters of extending the tax say abundant opportunities for recreation are one of the city's selling points to attract new businesses.



Bulman

And they feed on each other.

"As Rapid City continues to grow and attract new businesses

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Tax: For recreation

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as well as new families, demand for the recreational opportunities also will increase," said Alderman Karen Bulman, a member of the city's golf committee.

Using the city's recreational facilities along with the surrounding Black Hills to lure new jobs to the city "is one of the best things we have going for us," Bulman said. "We're an oasis in the plains."

The city, in conjunction with the YMCA, is completing a study of all area recreational facilities and the cost of more facilities. The study should be finished by the end of November.

Preliminary results show area residents want gym space for volleyball, basketball and other year-round activities; indoor swimming pools, aerobic, fitness and dance rooms; weight lifting and cardiovascular exercise areas; and indoor running tracks.

Also, Bulman said, the city's aging outdoor pools badly need repairs.

If the half-cent sales tax now paying off Rushmore Plaza Civic Center is extended past 1995, when it is scheduled to end, a portion of the \$4 million it raises annually could be used for a variety of recreation projects, Bulman said.

Just what projects depends on the outcome of the recreation study.

"We're really waiting," Bulman said. "That's why we don't have a

brick-and-mortar plan."

There is little chance the city will resurrect its proposed aquatic park, say officials. Its zero-depth pool slides and play area came with a \$3 million price tag.

"The public has said, 'We don't want you to do this,'" Bulman said. "So we aren't."

But without the revenue generated by the half-cent tax, expanding the city's recreation facilities will be difficult, she said.

"If we don't have that half cent, there is no way to build an indoor (recreation) facility," Bulman said. "And we will still have to address the (condition of) outdoor pools."