Vision 2012 seeking input from citizens

By Andrew Smith

Rapid City is planning for its future, and the public is invited.

'Vision Rapid City 2012' is a program designed by Mayor Ed McLaughlin to develop long-range plans for community development over the next 20 years.

"If people want to get involved, we'd like to get as many people involved as we can," said Administrative Assistant Kay Rippentrop.

"The purpose is to reach as many people as we can and have them tell us what direction they'd like to see Rapid City go as far as their capital improvements."

Informational meetings are being held where citizens can sign up to be on a focus group to help plan the city’s future. Wards 3 and 5 will be holding their informational meeting March 19th, from 7-9 PM at the Canyon Lake Senior Center. Wards 1 and 2 will hold their meeting April 2 at South Jr High School at 7:30 PM. Ward 4 held its meeting February 19th.

"Anyone can come," said Ward 3 Alderwoman Twyla Rabe. "It's specifically for the people of Wards 3 and 5, but anyone can come. And bring your questions; we'll have people there to answer them." Rabe said the mayor and his staff, city council members, and other city officials would be there March 19th to answer questions.

Rippentrop said the goal of the informational meetings was to generate discussion and get enough people interested in joining the focus groups to get a good community consensus. "We'd like to have 45-50 people in each group," he said. "If we have more than that, we'd do two sessions." She said the city would like to have input from at least five percent of its citizens.

Among items already being proposed are a world class museum combining exhibits from SDSM&T, The Archaeological Research Center, The Sioux Indian Museum, and The Pioneer Museum. Also proposed is a visitors information center along I-90 to entice travelers to stay and visit the Black Hills; an expansion of the Dahl Fine Arts Center, an indoor sports complex, a restoration of Canyon Lake Park, a southwest bypass around Rapid City; a recycling plant, and an expansion or replacement of neighborhood swimming pools.

City Finance Officer Richard Walstrom said that he did not expect the discussions to stay limited to the topics listed above. "We would expect that as we go to the different areas of the city there may be some area related requests," he said. "And you never know when somebody might come up with a really great idea."