Community leaders focus on projects wanted or needed by the year 2012.

By Paulette Tobin
Journal Staff Writer

What will Rapid City be like 20 years from now? Will the often-discussed and long-dreamed-of museum be built? Will Rapid City finally have its road over the hill? A group of Rapid City elected officials and business leaders met Friday at the invitation of Mayor Ed McLaughlin to focus on the kinds of projects the community wants and needs to build by the year 2012.

The group listed new schools, new roads and museums among its top priorities. (See story at right.)

Next, McLaughlin said, he wants city aldermen to hold similar meetings in each of Rapid City's five wards to give residents a chance to say how resources should be allocated.

At stake in the discussion: a city half-cent sales tax, currently being used to pay the sales tax on the civic center, which will end in 1995. If the tax is extended, the tax could provide $4.3 million a year to finance capital improvement projects.

Richard Stuhlmeyer, who led the four-hour meeting Friday, said the group's conclusions should not be seen as "a be-all and end-all to be sold to the community."

Rather, the group's work should be regarded as a "straw man" that can be torn down or built up as the community wishes, he said.

The group also discussed how the community could set goals and how community needs should be determined.

It recommended studying the economic impact of proposed projects and conducting independent surveys to determine community support.

The group — which included aldermen, county commissioners, school board members, Chamber of Commerce board members and representatives from the Economic Development Foundation — told the mayor he should establish a group he calls Rapid City 2012 with a full-time administrator to help plan the city's future.

McLaughlin said he would ask aldermen to hold neighborhood meetings.

"The community needs to know they are expected to have a role in this," McLaughlin said.

"They have to have the opportunity to speak their piece. And I think it is their responsibility."

Building priorities

Mayor Ed McLaughlin invited a group of elected officials and business leaders to set priorities for city building and capital improvement projects. The group considered 31 projects and identified them by highest priority, second priority and third priority.

The individual projects in each category are in no particular order.
Top priority: Third high school; world class museum; visitor information center; Canyon Lake restoration; southwest bypass; Minnesota Street completion; Park Dave extension to new school; recycling plant; three new elementary schools and a new middle school; enhancement of the public water supply; economic development fund.

Second priority: O'Hara Stadium renovation; indoor sports complex; Dahl Fine Arts Center expansion; road over the hill; airport road to Interstate 59; Rushmore Plaza Civic Center parking; public transportation; outdoor pool rehabilitation; aquatics center; expressway south to Denver; downtown parking garage; enhance existing infrastructure.

Third priority: Indoor tennis complex; land for Memorial Park; Central States Fairground expansion; Rushmore Plaza Civic Center; in-patient mental health facility; vocational school expansion; purchase dog track; youth center; ski walk from civic center to Holiday Inn.