

## Squeezing in downtown

Members of the Downtown Business Association and Swift Current City administration squared off at the Entrepreneurial Centre last Wednesday to solve the parking puzzle downtown.

Recent proposals for new developments and the expansion of existing businesses have caused some downtown employees to wonder if there's going to be adequate parking in the downtown core in the near future.

Currently, there are 200 off street public parking stalls available in city-owned parking lots.

Chief Administrative Officer Matt Noble said that it's the city's priority to attract new development, not maintain free parking lots.

"We realize we're basically on a bit of a trampoline," he said. "We do not know where our market will settle, but certainly it is not the intention of this council as they've indicated to us, to put limitations to development.

"When opportunity knocks open the door, find out who it is and if they're welcome, then welcome them in."

Some businesses have already taken matters into their own hands, such as the Southwest Credit Union. Currently, that organization provides 85 stalls for their employees and another 40 for members.

Susan Woods, vice president of human resources and organizational development, said 100 feet worth of space has been purchased on 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue NE for more spaces and they are looking at future parking spots outside of the downtown core.

But not all businesses can afford to buy land for their employees to park.

Lance Baumann, 1<sup>st</sup> Step Studio, said he would like to see a master plan created of how the city will develop downtown.

"The street parking is very adequate for the customers, it's the employees that are going to be having a problem," he said.

"Free parking for staff is over. We're going to have to start paying for our parking."

City administration encouraged the DBA to approach owners of private parking lots to lease vacant spaces. Otherwise, walking a little bit farther to work might be an option staff should consider.

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