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CFP SOUTHFIELD

Students take a fresh look at Southfield

Vision for City Centre to be shown to officials and public

December 1, 2005

BY GINA DAMRON
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

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These planners see an urban downtown.

Shopping districts with pedestrian-friendly walkways.

Bridges connecting the community across Northwestern Highway and the Rouge River.

A welcome center inviting visitors into Southfield.

These planners are not professionals -- at least not yet -- but rather 14 architecture students from Lawrence Technological University who are taking a fresh look at how the city can improve its downtown district.

"You can't just draw the building



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Students take a fresh look at Southfield

and plop it on a site," said junior Keith Bartley, 22, of Clarkston, who is in the Junior Integrated Design Studio 3 class, which is producing the project. "You have to design around it."

The class is studying what Southfield calls its City Centre -- bounded by I-696 to the north, 10 Mile Road to the south, the Southfield Civic Center to the east and the Southfield Town Center to the west.

The students are separated into four groups, each of which is designing site plans for different parts of the district. Their plans, which will be presented to city officials Dec. 16 at a public exhibition, could be incorporated into future downtown projects, said Nik Banda, Southfield's director of planning and economic development.

But urban planning is new to these students, whose focus in previous classes has been mostly on the architecture of single buildings.

With the Southfield project, "you're changing not just a building, but changing an entire area," said junior Andrea Lazor, 22, of Southfield.

Banda said the city hired a consulting firm in the mid-1990s to study the area and create a guidebook for development. "Now it's time to tweak that plan," he said.

He's been meeting with the students once a week since the class started in August and said their focus has been on mixed-use buildings, often with first-floor retail and upper-level offices or housing. They've even talked about making Southfield, where LTU is located, a college town.

Watching them move through the project, Banda said, "got me pretty fired up."



Lawrence Technological University professor Joongsob Kim of Southfield explains various sites on the model, constructed by students, of the proposed Southfield City Centre on display at LTU's Detroit Studio. (HUGH GRANNUM/Detroit Free Press)

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YOU'RE INVITED

What: Lawrence Technological University's Southfield City Centre Study Project public reception and exhibition

When: 4-6 p.m. Dec. 16

Where: Southfield Parks and Recreation Department, 26000 Evergreen, room 115

For more information: Call Southfield Director of Planning and Economic Development Nik Banda at 248-796-4154, from 8 a.m.-5 p.m. weekdays.

The students are excited too. For some, just traveling around the city has been an inspiration.

"You can't drive through the area," said junior Raymond Schauer, 20, of Warren, "and look at it the same way."

Contact **GINA DAMRON** at 248-351-3293 or damron@freepress.com.

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CFP SOUTHFIELD

Site plan A

December 1, 2005

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The students: Brian Murray, 24, of Waterford; Ben Gregory, 21, of Southfield; Keith Bartley, 22, of Clarkston; Michael Poma, 25; of Macomb Township

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Project location: Civic Center Drive and Northwestern Highway, east of Lahser Road and west of Evergreen.

The site plan: To turn the area -- situated on wetlands with few developments -- into a pedestrian-friendly site that would have a downtown feel similar to Royal Oak. The plan includes developing mixed-use buildings that would include first-floor retail and upper-floor residential housing and creating a nearby conference center, where city events could be held. The group also wants to expand the wetlands to make a short river-and-path system that would take advantage of the green space and provide easy access to buildings throughout the development.

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CFP SOUTHFIELD

Site plan B

December 1, 2005

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The students: Matana Drucker, 26, of Troy; Christina Span, 25, of Detroit; Matthew Willbur, 24, of Detroit

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Project location: At Northwestern Highway and 10 Mile and down Evergreen to the Mary Thompson Farm.

The site plan: The area, at the southern end of the City Centre district, where there's a Michigan First Credit Union, Kerby's Koney Island, a cell phone retailer and condos a little further north on Evergreen. Though there are already developments, the group wants to make the area denser with mixed-use buildings for retail, office and residential use. The group is looking at putting a welcome center near 10 Mile and Evergreen that would provide information about Southfield and invite visitors into the city's downtown. Further north on Evergreen, near the Mary Thompson Farm, the plan calls for a farmers market with an indoor-outdoor plaza, where residents could sell produce.

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CFP SOUTHFIELD Site plan C

December 1, 2005

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The students: Irsida Bejo, 23, of Royal Oak; Raymond Schauer, 20, of Warren; Alex Banchemo, 20, of Royal Oak

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Project location: Civic Center Drive and Evergreen across from the Southfield Public Library and municipal complex, spanning northward toward 11 Mile Road and west past Central Park Boulevard.

The site plan: On the property now are a few tall office buildings, two of which are vacant, a T.G.I. Friday's and several asphalt parking lots. The plan, which incorporates most of the existing buildings, calls for the creation of a U-shaped, old-town-style district that would come off Evergreen and expand west past Central Park Boulevard. It would have archway entrances and grassy medians running the length of the area, with rectangular ponds and possibly brick pathways. The roadway would be lined with mixed-use buildings -- which could house stores, offices and housing units -- that have different architectural designs to give a more distinctive old-town look. At the end of the district, shaped in a semicircle, there would be a farmers market or pavilion.

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CFP SOUTHFIELD

Site plan D

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The students: Andrea Lazor, 22, Devoney Edwards, 21, Corey Rees, 22, Ann Knecht, 24 -- all live in Southfield.

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Project location: Lawrence Technological University's campus, on the west side of Northwestern Highway off 10 Mile Road.

The site plan: Connect the community with the campus via an enclosed bridge over Northwestern from the campus to the Southfield Town Center to provide easier access for students, residents and business people. The bridge would contain some retail and possibly dining options. The plan also calls for a greater retail environment on campus to create more pedestrian traffic. To make LTU more functional for students, the group wants athletic fields moved from the southern end of the campus to the northern end near the field house, a more prominent courtyard area and a walk along the Rouge River, which cuts through campus.

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