Students draw plans for Southfield

City to consider Lawrence Tech class concepts for a municipal center as community updates master plan.

Delores Patterson / The Detroit News

SOUTHFIELD -- As Southfield's planning department gets into updating the city's master plan, it may consider the conceptual designs of Lawrence Technological University students to develop a new city center.

Seventeen juniors from Dr. Joongsub Kim's urban architectural design class recently

Seventeen Lawrence Tech architecture students recently presented four concepts for the development of Southfield's city center area as part of a 14-week project. The students focused on a half square mile near Civic Center Drive and Evergreen near the Southfield Town Center and the TGI Friday's.
presented four comprehensive concepts for Southfield's city center area as part of a 14-week project, said Nicholas Banda, director of planning and business for the city.

The idea for a city center evolved from discussions more than 15 years ago, when officials were tossing around the idea of developing a downtown and realized Southfield wasn't designed for a traditional main street that included residences, as is found in cities like Farmington. Southfield's city center has all the elements of a downtown -- commercial properties, retail, major office space and dense residences within a walkable area -- but they're all spread out, said Roy Bell, a former City Council member who was recently appointed to serve on the Planning Commission.

The area is defined roughly by 11 Mile on the north, Evergreen on the east and 10 Mile on the south; the western border cuts between Lahser and Northwestern Highway and includes some of the city's business corridor according to Bell, who was instrumental in getting the city to work closer with Lawrence Tech.

The students focused on a half square mile near Civic Center Drive and Evergreen near the Southfield Town Center and the TGI Friday's restaurant, which are just north of Lawrence Tech.

Banda said the essence of each plan included incorporating the several colleges in the area and giving students things to do. For example, one proposal included building a plaza over Interstate 696 to link Lawrence Tech and the Town Center area and include nearby restaurants, retail and nightclubs, he said. The University of Phoenix and Siena Heights University have campuses in the area.

"I believe we have something like 5,200 college students in the area and their thoughts were to capitalize on that," Banda said.
Adjunct Professor George Bridges, who also helped with the projects, said students also focused on making the area more pedestrian-friendly with developments that include more retail and residential, as well as a farmers market and welcome center on 10 Mile and Evergreen.

The proposals have generated interest from residents such as Mary Wilson. "I think they came up with a lot of creative ideas, that, if used, can only make Southfield an even better place to live," Wilson said.

The proposals are expected to be published by March and officials have agreed that the LTU plans would be given serious consideration in updating Southfield's master plan. The master plan hasn't been revised extensively since about 1987.

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