

The Underground is alive and thriving in Southfield

By TOM LONERGAN

From one angle, where the ground nearly slopes to the top of the building, it looks like a big bomb shelter. From another, totally open side, it looks like a parking structure for the surrounding multi-story apartments and office buildings.

But when 2,000 students march in and out of it next fall, there will be no mistaking Oakland Community College's new Southfield campus between Nine Mile Road and the Lodge Freeway.

HALF OF the \$6.4 million two-story building is being constructed underground. Three of its sides and the roof will be predominantly covered with grass, while the fourth side will be mostly glass.

The only earth-sheltered college building in the state, it will present a striking contrast to its 17- and 18-story neighbors in the Northland, Providence Hospital area, the most developed section of Oakland County.

The Southfield campus, which will be primarily for nursing and science students, is expected to be open in September 1980.

"The neighborhood really didn't need another high rise," said architect Harold Van Dine, of the Troy firm

of Straub, Van Dine and Dziurman. The "underground" project was the first designed by the firm. There are only a few college buildings like the OCC project in the country.

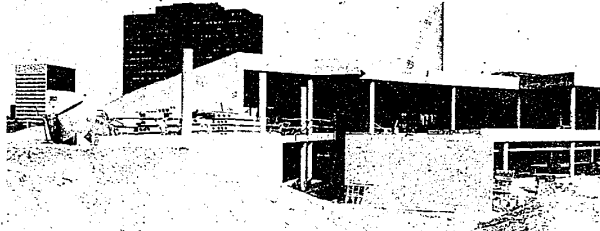
The unconventional design is "100 percent due to energy considerations," said Van Dine.

It's costing the college \$500,000 more to build partially underground. But Van Dine said the extra cost could be recovered in 15 years because the building will be two-thirds cheaper to operate than a conventional structure. The firm's original cost recovery estimate was 25 years and Van Dine said the college could improve on the 15-year estimate.

The college expects to save a bundle on the building's heating bill, said Soren Gormanian, OCC director of physical facilities.

THE GRASS covered roof and three sides are "critical to the insulation," Van Dine said, and will cut heat loss. Van Dine said winter heat loss through the roof is half of a conventional building's total heat loss.

The building's open side faces southeast, the "sunny side," he explained, while winter winds from the northwest and west will be blocked by the earth-covered sides.



It's not a big garage — it's Oakland Community College's new \$6.4 million "earth integrated" Southfield campus, surrounded by high-rise

apartments, hotels and office buildings. The unconventional design was favored for energy efficiency. (Photo by Dwight Cendrowski.)

The building's roof is far from ordinary. Two feet of topsoil and a sprinkler system are expected to keep the grass growing. To prevent dirt and gravel from getting into the drainage system, a thin membrane will also cover the roof.

Throughout the year, Van Dine said, the earthen roof and sides will moderate temperature extremes. Gormanian said it won't be necessary to turn the heat on in the building until the temperature outdoors falls below 19 degrees.

THE SOUTHFIELD campus won't be solar heated, but, said Van Dine, "the building will be ready for it when solar collectors come down in price and the system becomes more practical."

Rooms that don't need a lot of light — such as storage areas and utility rooms — are further away from the building's open side. Classrooms, offices and activity areas are closest.

"Everyone will be able to see daylight along the building's corridors," Van Dine said.

UM-Dearborn swings into new season

The following is a list of events and activities at the University of Michigan-Dearborn scheduled through Sept. 30. The campus is located at 4901 Evergreen Road in Dearborn. For additional information, call the Information Center at 593-5555.

Wednesday, Sept. 19: Caruso Brothers provide the entertainment for the Courtyard Series at 11:30 a.m. The free concert will feature soft rock and pop music.

Eric Nagler, prominent in Toronto folk circles, makes his debut at the Hinge Coffeehouse at 8 p.m. in the Recreation and Organizations Center. The concert will be traditional and contemporary folk music including some of Nagler's own compositions. Admission is \$1.25 for students, \$1.75 for general public. Includes refreshments. The non-profit Hinge is sponsored by UM-D's Student Activities Office.

Monday, Sept. 24: Hungarian pianist Tibor Szasz opens the Cultural

Events Committee's Monday night free concert series at 8 p.m. in the Fair Lane Conference Center.

Wednesday, Sept. 26: Folk singer Connie Huber performs for the Courtyard Series at 11:30 a.m. Bring a lunch and enjoy the free outdoor entertainment.

Gemini offers American and British folk music at the Hinge Coffeehouse at 8 p.m. in the Recreation and Organizations Center. Admission \$1.25 for students, \$1.75 for general public.

Sunday, Sept. 30: Fair Lane Music Guild's annual Music Walk, a series of four mini-chamber concerts held in private homes, is set for 3-5:30 p.m. Admission for the fund-raiser is \$5. For information, call 563-9452.

Sunday, Sept. 23: Guided tours of historic Fair Lane, 56-room home of automotive pioneer Henry Ford from 1-4:30 p.m. Admission is \$2, \$1.50 for children and senior citizens.



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