

Building Scene

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Riverfront housing tackled by students



Photos by JIM JAGDFELD/staff photographer

Alan Goschka won honorable mention for his design.

Christopher M. Garrison was a first-place winner with an apartment design featuring subsidized rent

By Doug Funke
staff writer

ARCHITECTS in training can make design statements, too. Christopher M. Garrison and Alan Goschka, seniors at Lawrence Technological University in Southfield, did just that during a student competition sponsored by the Masonry Institute of Michigan.

Garrison, 28, a Farmington Hills resident, placed first overall, and Goschka, 23, who lives on campus, won honorable mention for designing a hypothetical high rise apartment building on a Detroit River site between Chene Park and St. Aubin Marinas.

The exercise was incorporated into a 10-week design course at LTU.

The students' task was to design an apartment building containing both market-rate and subsidized-rent units and to integrate a restaurant, medical clinic and convenience store into the site.

Both Garrison and Goschka angled their apartment buildings toward the river so that all tenants would have some view of the waterfront.

Garrison designed a 15-story building with 96 units, the subsidized units on the lower floors, market rate above with two penthouses on the roof.

EACH OF THE market rate units has a laundry. Laundries were placed to service an entire floor of the subsidized units to keep costs down.

Other key elements of his design include a parking deck with grass and other shrubbery on the top level to provide a private, park-like setting, and an exercise room and racquet courts inside on the ground floor.

Garrison put the restaurant, store and clinic beyond the parking deck, using the deck to buffer the residence from public access.

"I tried to make the units function first, make the units work," he said. "Form derives from function."

Professional architects serving as judges cited Garrison's organization of the entire building, attention to the structural system and building circulation.

Goschka designed a 10-story, 90-unit apartment placing subsidized units on every floor with the market rate units. His restaurant is on-top of the apartment with separate elevator entrance, the clinic and store in front beyond a circular driveway.

Each unit contains a washer, dryer and balcony. The parking is underground.

"The bigger units are on wings at the end of the building," Goschka said. "They have more view of the river."

units on the lower floors, two penthouses, and a parking deck.

Judges noted a dramatic sense of entry and Goschka's attempt to deal with parking on the site.

LTU STUDENTS worked in teams to do much of the preliminary research.

"We did come down and look at the site. You've got to get a feel for the area," Garrison said.

Some teams researched the city's master urban plan for the area, others building codes, still others masonry details on other projects.

Then they got down to the design business for themselves. Unlike real-life situations, students weren't given cost restrictions.

"They wanted you to explore your own design and not limit you to a budget," Goschka said.

Garrison works as a computer aided design operator and draftsman for Stucky + Vitale Architects.

"I did all of this (project) on a computer," he said. "It gave me an advantage. I think I could be more creative in design rather than crunched out a project. You work on each part — elevations, sections, floor plans — at the same time."

Goschka, who has worked as an engineering aide and draftsman, incorporated rust and tan-colored bricks into his design.

"I WOULD like to do commercial and residential (architecture), but probably more commercial," he said. "I like the design aspect, to design something and see it start from nothing and get form so people drive by and say, 'Alan did this.'"

Garrison incorporated bricks of four different colors, green, blue/gray, gray and salmon into his design.

"I always wanted to be an architect," he said. "I did drawings when I was in second grade. A neighbor tutored me, spurred me on, I guess. I like all aspects of architecture. I'd rather do something I like than something just to earn a living."

Tom Nashlen, associate professor of design at LTU, taught both Garrison and Goschka.

"Chris isn't just designing a facade. He's thinking of the building's user, the building's image," Nashlen said. "He got an early jump on the project. He came up with a pretty good scheme early on and just ran with it. He's a good designer. He looks at deadlines with a mature view."

Goschka tried several different approaches before settling on his final product, Nashlen said.

"He came up with a concept that integrated the site to the river," Nashlen said. "There was clarity in the way the building was laid out from the street. I think one of Alan's excellent skills is the ability to make a model."

"Both of those students were able to blend art and science," Nashlen said. "They packed a lot of work into the time we had available."

Garrison and Goschka plan to pursue master's degrees in architecture and practice professionally.

Open housing group seeks builders

By R.J. King
special writer

In the two years since the Oakland County Center for Open Housing first sought to lend a helping hand to minorities, the organization has found that more and more of the home seekers it serves are in the market for new housing.

"The first thing we do is establish how much money someone wants to spend, and where they want to live, and from those interviews we have found the request for new housing is increasing," said Barbara Talley, director of the center, which is located in Birmingham Farms.

"When we first started, maybe 2 percent of the people we interviewed were looking to move into new neighborhoods. The percent has grown to 10 percent, and we believe the interest will continue to grow."

As a result, the center is appealing to area builders and developers to become more actively involved in the organization, either by signing on as corporate members or supplying information on particular offerings or services.

"For every family we interview, we supply a home seeker's packet which contains information about Realtors, bankers, movers and inspectors, but we need more input from area builders and developers," said Ann Wetlaufer, community outreach coordinator for the center.

"Development material would be invaluable to the families we serve and offer yet another vehicle for builders to market their services. Given the construction industry is just now beginning to rebound, this could really help area builders."

THE CENTER'S MISSION is to build community understanding and support for fair and open housing while encouraging a stable and integrated housing process within Oakland County. The center works with banks, Realtors, and church groups to achieve its goals.

Quentin Kenan, national sales manager for Telesource, a telecommunications firm in Pontiac and a resident of Rosedale Park in northwest Detroit, said he utilized the center in researching a move to Farmington Hills, which will be completed in early June.

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— Barbara Talley
Oakland County Center for
Open Housing

"I have a 9-year-old daughter, and I was very concerned about various school systems and coaching and counseling in the recreational areas," said Kenan. "It was very important to me to find an excellent school for my daughter."

"The center also provided demographic information for various communities and information on home prices. Trying to find that kind of information on my own would be pretty tough. It would have taken a great deal of time and research."

FUNDED BY CORPORATE grants, the city of Southfield, Oakland County, community foundations and area churches, the center operates with an annual budget of \$100,000. It has five part-time employees and a corps of 300 volunteers.

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