

Centre from page C1

expected to be spent on renovations throughout the 55,000-square-foot facility.

This fall, the city will seek a \$1 million Kresge grant and must raise at least another \$1 million to match it, said Marlowe Bolger, vice president of the city's cultural arts division.

Most of the additional money will pay for further renovations to one of the two auditoriums, a converted temple with bench seating. The tentative plan includes building second-floor dressing rooms above the stage.

"We're only at the first of three phases," she said. "We're opening the doors for the community to come visit the facility. But the appeal is regional. It's open to art groups from Detroit to Rochester."

A formal survey conducted in the early 1980s indicated a need to provide a place for local arts groups. The city recognized that need. But the debate about the value of spending tax money for the arts often paralleled the broader national debate on the issue, which often slipped into political grandstanding. Or reflected the view that art was a luxury, not a necessity, and that artists should fend for themselves.

"For the last 20 years, many people didn't think we should be spending our time on the arts

center," said Albert Scaglione, a board member of the federation of the arts, a council of 53 arts groups throughout metro Detroit.

"Many of us realized Southfield is at a crossroads," said Scaglione, who also owns Park West Gallery on Northwest Highway. "It's critical to have stability in our cultural activities and do it in a way that's not only for the upper classes, but for all people."

Cultivating understanding

At a time of reduced public funding for the arts, Southfield is boldly stating a claim as a city with a progressive cultural vision and gutsy civic leadership.

"Southfield has taken a leadership role to establish a model for other communities to centralize an arts organization that provides for a group facility," said Lucius Theus, president of the federation for the arts.

"We already had many arts activities in Southfield, but once we had a place to help focus our efforts, the synergy of all the groups came together," said Theus, a private-sector business consultant and retired Air Force major general.

"As a city, we're going to accomplish our goal faster than

if we'd have left it up to these groups to find a way for themselves," he said. The goal, according to Theus, goes well beyond encouraging artistic expression. Ultimately, he said, the center is a tangible means to build cross-cultural understanding.

In the mid 1980s, Theus served on a committee studying race relations in the armed forces. The committee proposed an ethnic understanding program to minimize racial friction. It succeeded, according to Theus, in reducing the frequency and intensity of racially motivated incidents. A lively arts center with diverse ethnic arts groups mingling with each other will cultivate wider tolerance, said Theus.

Like an evolving piece of art and the city itself, the Southfield Centre is a "work in progress." While this week the focus is on completing a 20-year dream, the long-term success depends on whether the 80 arts groups who gave commitments to use the facility will indeed make the center their home.

"When we first acquired the building, plugs and bare wires were hanging from the ceiling. There was more work to be done than we anticipated," said Block. "We told the arts groups that we'd provide the facility, but the

operational funds would have to come from them."

Yet there is no formal process whereby arts groups can reserve and rent the facility. For instance, rental fees, said Belanger, are negotiated based on what the groups can afford. The Photography Guild, which holds its weekly meetings at the center, has provided ongoing photographic documentation of the renovation in place of paying rent.

Ten days prior to the grand opening, city officials joked about wearing hard hats to the opening. But that shouldn't be necessary. Most of the painting had been completed. Carpenters were putting the finishing touches on the walls and laying carpet in the bold-color-scheme hallways.

Meanwhile, in her office not far from the cluttered general-purpose auditorium, Belanger wondered whether the specially ordered silk draperies would arrive on time. She didn't seem bothered.

"I've been at this for 18 years," she said. "It seems like such a long time. Then again, it seems like such a short time."

Either way, the Southfield Centre for the Arts has been a long time coming.

Conversations from page C1

Perhaps the sports memorabilia industry is a crass case of value being determined by salivating demand on one side and those who smugly control the supply on the other.

A few days after the Wings defeated the Avalanche, a man walked into the Sports Gallery looking for a puck signed by a Red Wing. He explained it was a gift - for his wife. The autographed rubber puck cost \$45. That was the starting price.

Exhibitor player salaries are well documented. In the early 1980s, Magic Johnson signed a 25-year, \$25 million contract with the LA Lakers. This year, Michael Jordan will receive about that amount for one year.

National obsession

Sports is not only big business, it's a national obsession. How else could you explain athletes receiving \$3,000 to \$50,000 to attend an autograph signing. Collectors might want to brush up on Economics 101. These days, the most popular players put their name on everything from photos to underwear. A glut in the market, any economics professor will tell you, means prices eventually will fall.

In many ways, the Sports Gallery not only offers a collection of interesting memorabilia. It is a museum of Americana. Boxing trunks worn by Muhammad Ali during the 1960

Olympics cost \$750. A Chicago Bulls jersey signed by Dennis Rodman goes for \$725. A baseball signed by players who've hit 600 or more home runs is priced at \$1,500. To guarantee that the signatures are the real thing, most items come with certificates of authenticity. Of course, the document is more of a word of honor rather than a binding legal document.

Unfortunately, what often gets overlooked about the marketing hype is the outstanding photography of modern-day sports warriors captured in the heat of a dramatic battle. There's Magic dishing an assist. Jordan flying to the hoop. Grotzky and Howe engaged in a private locker room conversation. And then, there are images of Bird, Montana, Kaline, Aaron, Ripkin, DiMaggio and, of course, Yzerman and other Red Wings.

Fischman's favorite is a signed team photo by all the members of the gold medal 1980 US hockey team. He's as fond of the "piece of history" as he is of his baseball card collection.

And to think that in the old days, autographed photos of athletes came inside a wrapped package of bubble gum.

The Sports Gallery is at 289 S. Woodward, Birmingham; (248) 642-0044. Or on the Internet: <http://www.bigweb.com/sports-gallery>

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Festival from page C1

Association.

"I think it's a great idea for Livonia to institute a fine arts exhibit," said Stevens, who won first place in the State's open watercolor show last fall. "It sounds like a lovely idea to have a fine arts show in historical buildings."

Wayne State University art professor Stanley Rosenthal judged the Art in the Village competition awarding \$2,500 in cash prizes. Darcy Scott of West Bloomfield won the First Place (\$1,000) award for "Communion with Nature." The surreal watercolor features a table set with bread and wine against a desert background.

"I was extremely excited to win," said Scott, "and think the idea for the show is great. There's never enough art shows, in my opinion."

Jeri Fellwock of Farmington Hills has exhibited paintings at Farmington Artists Club shows in the historic Spicer House in Farmington Hills; Atrium Gallery, Northville, and Swords into Plowshares Peace Center and Gallery, Detroit. Fellwock will display a 30" by 38" watercolor entitled "Horse Parade" from a series on horses.

"I've been in many shows," said Fellwock. "We show art in a lot of different types of buildings. When we exhibit at the Spicer House, people enjoy coming to see that beautiful, old house and walking through the park. I think Art in the Village at Greenmead will get a lot of traffic from people who like historic buildings."

Mary Jordan Ehlert of Livonia toured the building at Greenmead several years ago. A retired Livonia Public Schools art teacher, Ehlert will greet visitors to the Newburgh School 2-5 p.m. Sunday, June 8. Ehlert will display her painting of Deer Isle Bridge in Maine. Among the exhibits in which she's taken part are the Michigan Fine Arts Competition at the Detroit Institute of Arts; Our Town exhibit, The Community House in Birmingham; Visual Arts Association of Livonia; Livonia City Hall; Michigan Watercolor Society and the Birmingham Bloomfield and the Birmingham Bloomfield Art Association.

"I think, it's about time we had fine art involved with the arts and crafts show," said Ehlert. Although the Hill House Museum will not be open for

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