

Regional low in building starts OU budget includes cuts

Building construction in the metropolitan area nosedived to at least a 12-year low in the first six months of 1980, according to the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG). SEMCOG reported that the number of building permits issued in the seven-county region during the first six months of 1980 was the lowest since the regional planning agency began collecting such statistics in 1966.

was a 26 percent increase over the 2,600 residential buildings torn down in the first six months of 1979. In Detroit, 2,400 demolition permits were issued, a 23 percent increase from 1979's first half. The permits minus the demolitions left a net 546 residential units added to the housing stock in 1980's first half, according to SEMCOG. A year earlier, the net addition was 8,830 units.

"THE GOOD news is they (building permits) can only go up," said Edward Hueston, SEMCOG's director of planning.

The last six months of the year will show no significant rebound, according to Hueston. Incomplete records cover-

ing six counties through last November show 6,000 residential permits were issued, far fewer than the 10,000 permits issued in the second halves of prior years.

The regional building decline during the first half of 1980 ranged from 76 percent in Monroe County to 30 percent in Washtenaw, when compared with the same period for 1979. Oakland County showed a 65.5 percent decline. Wayne, 67 percent and Macomb, 73 percent. High unemployment and high mortgage interest rates stifled the new housing market in most areas of the region, according to SEMCOG. The Federal Home Administration (FHA) home mortgage interest rate peaked at 16.05 percent last March.

The plan for the fiscal year ending June 30 anticipates new revenues will fall some \$600,000 short of spending, but the university carried over a surplus from the 1979-80 fiscal year to balance the new budget.

The new budget, approved Jan. 21, estimates an enrollment of 9,700 fiscal year equated students, provides for 20 new faculty positions and the April opening of O'Dowd Hall, a new \$8.5 million classroom/office building.

The budget includes reductions of \$1.9 million from the previous year, plus a \$16,000 surplus as a reserve for any additional state appropriation cuts.


OU's state aid for the current fiscal year is an estimated \$18.8 million, down nearly \$600,000 from the previous year.

Last year, the university banned out-of-state travel, began a freeze on filling vacant jobs and cut supplies and services in anticipation of budget cuts.

The OU board also increased winter tuition.

The university also delayed opening O'Dowd Hall until the spring semester to save on utility and other maintenance costs.

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Ma Bell seeks new billing methods for businesses

Michigan Bell Telephone Co. is seeking state Public Service Commission (PSC) approval of a new charging method for local business calls.

Bell has proposed a charge of 6.8 cents for calls that last less than five minutes, with an added charge of 1.2 cents for each additional minute. Local business calls are now 7.3 cents each, regardless of length.

The new charging plan, which would not effect residence customers, was filed with the PSC last month. A commission spokesman said public hearings may be held in April.

Bell said the new charging method would not increase the company's total revenues. Bell was granted an inflation-based rate increase of 8 percent last fall and is expected to seek another increase of at least 7.5 percent this year, the PSC spokesman said.

The PSC has granted Bell three inflation-based "rate reopeners," with an option to seek a fourth. This year's in-

crease would be the second of the three.

Most of its business customers would benefit from the new charging method, according to a Bell statement, which says 85 percent of all local business calls last less than five minutes. The average local business call lasts about three minutes, according to Bell.

The company estimates 70 percent of the businesses affected by the new method would save money, 10 percent would break even, and 20 percent would pay more.

The Bell plan also includes a 50 percent discount for local business calls made anytime on a Saturday, before 5 p.m. Sundays and after 11 p.m. daily.

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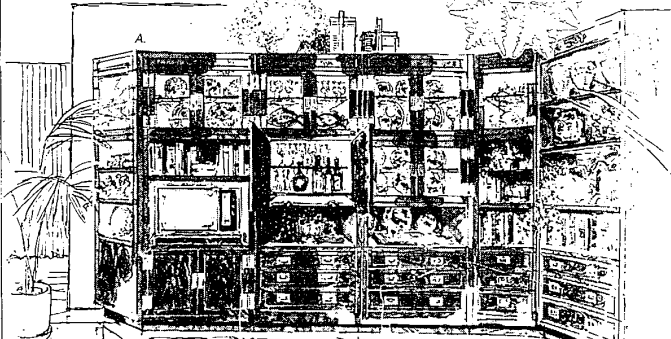
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