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## Rapid growth

Continued from previous page

requests, they took the philosophy of "Let's decide what we want overall and then do it," Gross explains.

An example of Southfield's approach to development was creation of the Civic Center, located west of Evergreen north of 10 Mile.

In 1958 Mary Thompson sold 166 acres to the city for the Center.

The complex was designed to be developed in stages, based on need and financing. (Southfield was the first city in the state awarded a federal grant to build municipal facilities.)

The Civic Center complex now includes municipal and public safety offices, library, court, recreation building, sports arenas and golf course, and a pavilion.

Southfield's zoning philosophy didn't go over without controversy. After the city adopted ordinances allowing highrise office and apartment buildings, there were outcries from residents who didn't like the idea of living in the shadow of skyscrapers.

But their objections gradually died down, partly as a result of the benefits of the office building boom.

Highrise developments provided the city with many tax and employment advantages. Businesses in Southfield now contribute more than 55 percent of tax revenues while taking up only 11.3 percent of the city's land.

velopments in Southfield didn't start overnight. In the 1950s and 1960s many offices began locating along mile roads.

The real boom in office construction started in the mid and late 1960s with the onset of "decentralization." Following racial and economic unrest in Detroit, many firms located or relocated in greener suburban pastures.

And Southfield was one of the greenest, with its available land, liberal zoning and receptive municipal attitude.

1968 was Southfield's first year for a million-plus square feet of office development. Now, 86 of the Fortune 500 companies have headquarters, regional or local offices in Southfield.

But what's in store for Southfield?

Gross says future planning philosophy is aimed at three things.

**THE FIRST IS** to diversify the city's tax base even further.

Although heavy industry — "smokestack-type" companies — aren't likely to move to Southfield, light industry and warehousing are good prospects.

Gross says in past months several companies have shown quite a bit of interest in developments such as Bridge Industrial Park.

The second aim is to preserve what the city already has. Many residential, commercial, industrial and office areas are from 20 to 30 years old. In coming years they'll need facelifts or complete overhauls.

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