

'21st-century workplace' unveiled

By Kathy Parrish
staff writer

When Jerome Schostak first started leasing Sam Frankel's Somerset property, the big question was, "Where's Troy?"

Now the creators of Somerset Mall intend to show people where Auburn Hills is.

Announcing their plans for the 1,800-acre Oakland Technology Park in the brand new Oakland County City, the two developers reminded a little about their longtime partnership.

And they encouraged others to take a chance with them on what they believe will be their biggest project.

"A number of years ago I came to Troy and looked at some vacant land. It was on the wrong side of Birmingham and had no utilities," recalled Frankel, whose "foolish risk" was now one of the largest conventionally financed projects of its kind in the U.S.

What Somerset Mall did was help develop a community.

When totally developed in five to 10 years, the high technology office and industrial park is expected to employ 15,000 to 20,000 workers. Michigan's High-Tech Task Force sees it as having the potential to become the premier location in the Midwest, if not the nation, for technology-based industry.

JOINING REAL ESTATE developers Frankel Associates of Troy and Schostak Brothers and Co. of Southfield in the announcement yesterday were other members of the unusual public/private consortium spearheading the project.

Involved are Oakland University, Oakland Community College (OCC) and Comerica Inc., which is the site's first occupant. Its 400,000-square-foot computer operations center is expected to open this summer on a 30-acre parcel.

Also cooperating in the venture is Oakland County's Economic Development Group.

"It's not simply a real estate venture," explained OU president Joseph Champagne, a prime mover in the project which he sees as a way for business and the university to share resources.

"It is the creation of a whole set of relationships and a networking effect."

MEETING in Meadow Brook Hall on the OU campus, consortium members briefed officials of both Auburn Hills and adjacent Avon Township, on the project. A small portion of it is in Avon. The 7:30 a.m. meeting was followed by a 9 a.m. session with some county officials who represent the area.

Schostak stressed his intention to work with the communities on the project, which he sees as a "workplace of the 21st century."

The developers said they expect land design studies and master planning to be completed by May 1, when they also hope to announce names of some future tenants.

One concern of city officials is zoning for the area, which now includes land zoned residential, commercial, university/college, cultural/recre-

ational and agricultural. Schostak said a few residences will be added as a buffer zone between the high tech operations and surrounding areas.

Auburn Hills planning commissioner B.J. Griffin said the community's land use plan calls for the area to be mainly prime residential and recreation.

"In some cases we will have to make dramatic changes,"

SCHOSTAK SAID the city's master plan will have to be altered for the project to succeed.

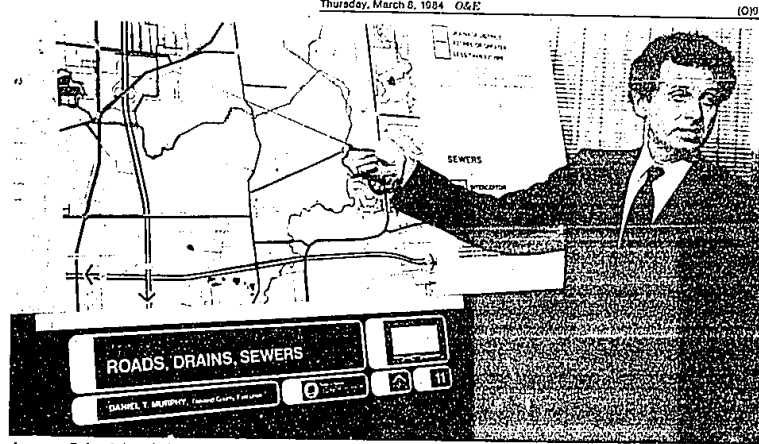
"We're hoping to create a new totality of a master plan — create a special district unto itself," explained the Franklin resident.

Also a consideration are tax abatements and other inducements to prospective tenants.

"Business incentives are very important to make us competitive," said Schostak. "To the extent our park can offer more incentives it makes us more attractive."

While those involved were pleased with the announcement, Frankel seemed especially proud: Since the early 1950s he's been buying land in the Rochester area, which he thought "would be the best place for people to move."

"I thought something would happen here, but I didn't realize the scope," said the developer, who credits OU's Champagne with serving as a "catalyst" for the endeavor.



Jerome Schostak, chairman and CEO of Schostak Brothers Inc. of Southfield, explains the layout of an 1,800-acre parcel of land to be developed into the largest high technology office and industrial park in the

state. It will be located in Avon Township and Auburn Hills. Schostak Brothers is a member of the consortium developing the plot along with Oakland University, OCC, Comerica and Frankel Associates.

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