

July 29, 1992
Kalamazoo Gazette
By Earlene McMichael

Park plan calls for group to oversee lake

EARLENE McMICHAEL
GAZETTE STAFF WRITER

Western Michigan University's latest design for its proposed business and research park includes part of the Asylum Lake property, but WMU is pledging to enlist a separate entity to manage the land to ensure no future development.

The design — the fourth to date — will be unveiled during a public meeting from 7 to 9 tonight at WMU's Fetzer Center, located off the intersection of Howard Street and West Michigan Avenue.

Project planners will also be available in the Fetzer Center from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Thursday to discuss the project.

"Should we go forward with this, we are committed to finding a third entity" to manage the Asylum Lake property, said Richard Burke, WMU's vice president of regional education and economic development.

Burke said the search continues for a group to oversee the Asylum Lake area, which currently totals 274 acres. The project design would take about 30 acres of the Asylum Lake property located north of Parkview and east of Drake Road.

The entity would manage those parts of the Asylum Lake property not in the development area and other project areas that would remain as open space, said William J. Johnson, president of the landscape architectural firm of William J. Johnson & Associates in

Ann Arbor.

The latest plan proposes the business-research park be located on 260 of the 600 acres WMU owns at the intersection of Drake and Parkview, including 30 acres of the Asylum Lake property. Part of the project would be in Oshtemo Township.

An earlier, similar design proposed a 290-acre development area and utilization of 40 to 60 acres of the Asylum Lake property.

Johnson said WMU must develop on a portion of the Asylum Lake property in order to effectively address existing traffic problems in the area due to the "over-demand" on the Oakland Drive and Parkview corridor.

"The geometry of addressing traffic issues that must be faced whether or not the park is developed necessarily bites into the cornfield at the northeast corner of the present intersection of Drake and Parkview," Johnson said. "You cannot do a good job of traffic design without working into that corner.

"We don't see it as a negative to take from the Asylum Lake preserve because the cornfield is not a critical part of the lake's natural system," Johnson said.

"It's an upland farm that is separate from the wetland system of Asylum Lake," he said, noting that the latest design is similar to earlier plans.

Please see WMU, Page C2

© 1970-2004 KALAMAZOO GAZETTE.

All rights reserved.

Used with permission of KALAMAZOO GAZETTE

WMU

Continued from C1

in proposing:

- The closure of a portion of Parkview to address neighborhood concerns about possible increased traffic because of the project.
- An additional U.S. 131 off-ramp near Stadium Drive, improving access to the park.
- Extending and widening Drake south of Stadium, making it a four-lane roadway.
- New bridge at 131 and Drake slightly south of its current location. The bridge could eventually connect with 9th Street.
- Placement of all multi-story park buildings close to U.S. 131, away from the Parkview Hills apartment and residential home development.
- A natural habitat area would be developed as a buffer between Parkview Hills and the park.

The plan calls for an open space area within the park to handle storm water runoff. Walkways and jogging trails also would be developed there.

The so-called "green belt" area would serve as a dividing line between the more dense use of the park near U.S. 131 on the west and the buildings on the east.

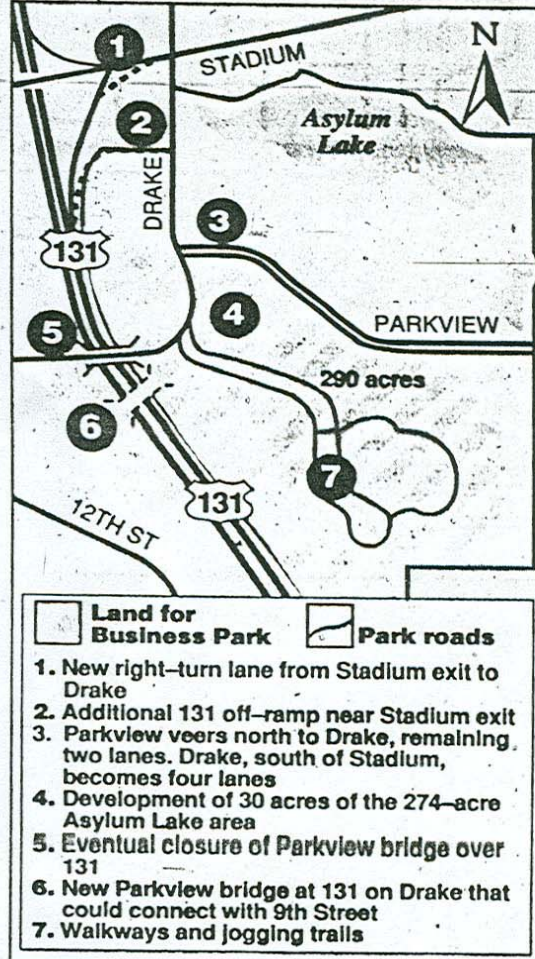
"It's a rather exciting notion of a business park being marketed to be the kind of place that you also want to live," Johnson said.

Johnson heads a team of planners that includes the Kalamazoo architectural firms of Larry L. Harris Associates and O'Boyle, Cowell, Blalock & Associates. The team reviewed three development scenarios and, from an extensive analysis of them, formulated the preliminary summary plan.

Participants in the planning process have included representatives of the affected neighborhoods as well as local environmental groups, the business community, city and township planning commission members and officials.

Issues addressed have included open space preservation, traffic flow, storm water runoff, neighborhood quality, land use and standards for design and construction.

PROPOSAL 4



SOURCE: Western Michigan University

GAZETTE MAP