

Southeast Quadrant enters second phase of development

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Evva Dossin, a teacher at the Romeo Engineering and Technology Center, and Tony D'Epifanio and Chris Fazzalare, both students at Lawrence Technological University, walk the southeast quadrant of downtown Romeo discussing possible land use as part of the second phase of the Southeast Quadrant Student Design Project. Fazzalare graduated from Romeo High School last year and helped work on the first phase of the project.

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The Romeo Southeast Quadrant Student Design Project has entered its second phase as work begins to organize and analyze the data collected during the last year.

The southeast quadrant of downtown Romeo includes Washington Street north to St. Clair Street, and east from Main Street to Bailey Street, as well as a portion between Bailey and Harriet streets.

Phase one of the project, which started last spring, included surveying business owners, building owners and residents. That portion of the project was primarily handled by students from the Romeo Engineering and Technology Center.

During the first part of phase one, approximately 40 people were surveyed, but since then that number has grown to approximately 200 people. The surveys asked several questions of business owners, building owners and residents including good land use, the assets in that quadrant, the major challenges of the quadrant, if landscaping beautification would be beneficial and whether a multi-level parking garage would be useful to the community.

Chris Fazzalare, a 2011 graduate of Romeo High School and one of the students who worked on phase one, said a majority of people surveyed felt the best use of land in that quadrant would be parking, followed by community spaces and finally retail spaces.

The majority of those surveyed agreed that the main assets were the historic buildings and location, followed by the fact it is the gateway to the Peach Festival and finally the available land in that space.

"That is seen in Lions Field as well, as some of these rental home properties which are possibly up for sale and the abundance of somewhat free parking here," said Fazzalare, a student at Lawrence Technological University.

Fazzalare said the quadrant does face some challenges moving forward, including regulations from the village and finding a plan with which everyone can agree.

A vast majority agreed that landscape beautification would be beneficial to the area; those who disagreed did so because they would like to see parking addressed first.

Finally the survey asked about interest in a possible multi-level parking garage. The original survey of 40 people was split in half with 50 percent saying "yes" and 50 percent saying "no." With 200 people surveyed, the number shifted slightly toward "no" with 52 percent against the garage.

Fazzalare said phase two of the project will require someone who is interested in the program to compile the data, and create possible themes and connections as well as a possible layout.

Tony D'Epifanio, also a student at Lawrence Tech, has stepped forward showing interest in helping move the project through phase two.

Phase three would then include asking more questions, refining the design and a proposal.

Evva Dossin, a drafting and architecture teacher at the Romeo Engineering and Technology Center, said last year there were several students interested in the project, but this year no students from Romeo Community Schools have expressed interest.

"I don't know if the scope is too large," she said.

Next year she said she would like to get her students working on a new commercial project that would involve creating a mixed-use commercial building to be located in the southeast quadrant.

"Whatever plan comes in, this could work in the constraints of that plan," she said.

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