

# Proposed SmartZone project discussed on Monday

By Tiffany L. Woods

LIFE Assistant News Editor

The importance and advantages of a University Park SmartZone were discussed in a proposal meeting Monday morning.

SmartZone is designed as a program that gathers information, which is then marketed in different ways to specific groups of people.

The mission of the SmartZone project is to build a national center for the research and development of business intelligence solutions, conduct industry-driven research, launch entrepreneurial activity and retain high-tech talent and wealth in the Mount Pleasant community, according to the mission statement.

Only 10 locations in Michigan will be approved for the SmartZone project, and Mount Pleasant applied for one of those spots. CMU has offered to purchase the Shell Building located in University Park to house SmartZone if Mount Pleasant is

accepted as one of the locations of the new program.

Representatives from the five entities involved in the University Park proposal were on hand to discuss the commitments their organizations have made to the creation of SmartZone.

These representatives include Tom Haine of the IBM Corporation, Rich Dubnick of the Meijer Corporation and Joe Kerbleski of the Dow Chemical Corporation.

Mount Pleasant Mayor Al Kaufmann and University President Michael Rao were both in attendance to represent the City and the university.

The five groups proposed a joint venture that would establish the CMU Research Corporation.

Doug Rothwell, president and chief executive officer of the Michigan Economic Development Corporation, said building the University Park SmartZone would re-establish the reputation of Michigan's technology.

"This would rebrand Michigan as a high-technology state. (SmartZone) would give high-technology activity to different regions across the state."

Bob Berry, Information Technology assistant vice president, said the University Park project is ready for completion.

"The entire middle-Michigan area is focused and ready. The infrastructure is ready, and we can connect globally wherever we want," he said.

According to the proposal packet, The Institute for Development of Entrepreneurial Activity would be created from SmartZone. Rao said CMU has made a commitment regarding SmartZone to recruit new technology companies to be incubated, lead the role in the management of the CMU Research Corporation and the IDEA Institute, actively recruit and facilitate faculty involvement and support the IDEA Institute with people

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and financial resources of \$200,000 annually.

Building the University Park SmartZone would be advantageous for the City and for CMU, Rao said.

"Our commitment is largely based on intellectual resources. We want to keep people in this area and build an enterprise. We think initially we will be critical in harvesting (technology in our region)."

Kaufmann said he agreed with Rao.

"The City and the university are historically intertwined in positive ways. We have met challenges in the economy together and our visions for the future are similar."

He said the future will hopefully include the University Park SmartZone.

"I am convinced that SmartZone is acceptable, doable and desirable."

The state of Michigan will decide by the end of the year whether or not CMU will be a destination for one of the 10 SmartZone projects. If construction goes accordingly, Berry said SmartZone may be open by September 2001.