



County seeks foundation aid for center

GENESEE COUNTY

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GENESEE COUNTY - The county needs help paying for everyday expenses at the massive Genesee Business Center, and officials are talking to the Mott Foundation about providing it.

Purchased by the county Land Bank just last year for \$10 to save it from demolition, the center on Flint's south side could become a financial drag unless something is done, officials said late last week.

A spokeswoman for the foundation and county Board of Commissioners Chairman Archie Bailey said Thursday they are discussing a grant to help pay for day-to-day operations.

"We just can't absorb the costs all by ourselves," said county Treasurer Daniel T. Kildee, who estimated the cost of insurance, utilities and other expenses at as much as \$500,000 a year.

Economic development and county officials have called the center a world-class building, ideal for companies that may start small but have the potential to grow.

One such company - ParkingCarma Inc. - already is negotiating to move into the facility, Kildee said.

But holding open space for companies with that high potential for growth costs money, and the marketing plan for the center doesn't involve recruiting businesses that could help pay the bills but have little potential for growth.

Kildee said taking that approach means money from another source is needed to pay the bills. He praised the Genesee Regional Chamber of Commerce, which is heading up marketing efforts, for pushing the vision for the center.

But without another source of cash, Kildee said, the county would have to start using the center for its own government offices or other uses to pay operating costs.

County taxpayers - through the county commissioners - already have committed \$400,000 to operating the center, and that money is nearly gone.

QUICK TAKE

About the Genesee Business Center

- The 500,000-square-foot building was part of the sprawling Great Lakes Technology Centre before the complex was divided and one section sold to the Genesee County Land Bank last year.
- It is on the southern edge of Flint at 4100 S. Saginaw St.
- The center is being marketed for office, retail/commercial, industrial/manufacturing, and research and development. A portion also is planned as business incubator space.
- The complex was developed on the site of the former Fisher Body plant, one of the sites of the Sit-Down Strike of 1936-37.

Bailey said he felt good about the potential for help from the foundation. The county's written proposal was delivered earlier this week.

Mott support would "keep it as it is - a high-class center," Bailey said.

Marilyn S. LeFeber, a spokeswoman for the Flint-based foundation, said the request is being evaluated.

"We've had some discussion. We need to go through the process," LeFeber said.

The 500,000-square-foot Business Center was part of the massive Great Lakes Technology Centre before the complex was divided and one section sold to the Land Bank. The Technology Centre was built on the site of the former General Motors Flint Body Assembly Plant.

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