

Published: February 14, 2016 8:00 AM

## Wayne State University to Add Housing

By **Chad Halcom**



Photo by Oakland University **Oakland University** last expanded its student housing in 2014 with the opening of Oak View Hall; the university has plans to further expand its student housing.

The traditional college experience is having a renaissance in Southeast Michigan, so much so that public universities are planning major investments in new and improved campus housing this year to accommodate the trend.

More 18-year-olds and first-time students trading home life for the campus might seem counter-intuitive, in a state with 100,000 fewer people than a decade ago, years of falling K-12 enrollment figures, an aging population and a displaced-worker surge from the Great Recession that has largely returned to work.

But the ranks of undergraduates at most local colleges are getting larger, getting younger and choosing on-campus housing over commuting or part-time enrollment, according to recent data submitted to the National Center for Education Statistics, an agency of the **U.S. Department of Education**.

**Wayne State University** hosted a mandatory pre-proposal meeting last week for developers, student housing real estate investment trust executives and others interested in an estimated \$100 million new student housing development project. The university is seeking proposals to build two apartment buildings along Anthony Wayne Drive by 2019 on the campus's northwest side and demolish the nearby Helen DeRoy Apartments — a net gain of more than 430 beds for university students.

Proposals are due by March 16. If all goes well, the university hopes to have a final development plan ready for its board of governors to review in September, and open the first phase of new apartments by fall 2018, said Tim Michael, associate vice president of business and auxiliary operations and chief housing officer at Wayne State.

Washington, D.C.-based **Brailsford & Dunlavey Inc.** is consulting with the university on the project. Michael said Wayne State is looking for a public-private partnership, where a developer would pay to build the project, lease property from the university and possibly act as property manager, to be reimbursed out of future student housing fees.

"We don't anticipate using any tuition or student fees to pay for the project," he said.

Michael estimates about 20 companies sent representatives to last week's meeting — a condition for bidding on the project. Wayne State is also converting the former Thompson Home that once housed its School of Social Work and will offer housing for up to 65 students, and plans a renovation that will add more than 150 new beds to the current Chatsworth Apartments.

All told, the university expects to expand housing capacity from about 3,100 today to 3,760 by 2022, Michael said.