

Officials see UO designs for fire stations

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Mail Tribune

February 01, 2014 2:00 AM

Architectural students from the University of Oregon unveiled designs and enthusiasm Friday for three new fire stations in Medford.

Kiana Motahari, a 21-year-old student from Iran, said her design of Fire Station 4 at the corner of Table Rock Road and Berrydale Avenue attempted to create a comfortable living space for the firefighters.

"They call them fire stations, but in the U.S. it's really the firemen's house," Motahari said. "The firemen spend so much of their time living in these buildings."

Motahari was one of 26 students who showed off plans to city officials and firefighters at the Carnegie Library. They prepared cardboard mock-ups to show what the existing fire stations look like, along with the new design.

The students and professors Virginia Cartwright and Jim Givens have joined with the city as part of the Sustainable City Year Program.

The city has approved spending \$10.6 million to rebuild or remodel three aging stations: Fire Station 2 on West Eighth Street, Fire Station 3 on Highland Avenue and Fire Station 4 on Table Rock Road.

Motahari said she was interested in listening to the firefighters to get a better idea of how to refine her drawings over the next six weeks.

Her design features a central courtyard that would act as a buffer between the public spaces in the front of the station and the living quarters in the back. The courtyard also would bring light into the center of the building.

Deputy Fire Chief Gordon Sletmoe looked over the dozens of drawings prepared by the students.

"I'm impressed for being halfway into a term," Sletmoe said.

He said the challenge for the students is to have a better understanding of the day-to-day activities of firemen.

Some of the drawings depicted too tight of a turn radius for fire trucks. Also, the Rogue Valley climate would be too dry to support many of the students' landscaping ideas, Sletmoe said.

Firemen perform their own landscaping, so they want to keep the upkeep to a minimum.

Sletmoe said he thinks many of the components of the drawings could be used in the final designs of the buildings.

Shikha Subramanian, a 23-year-old architectural student from the San Francisco area, said she's

worked on other projects, but was impressed by the uniqueness of designing a public building.

"This is much more than just a fire station," she said. "This is a chance to make a difference in a community."

Subramanian, who was designing Fire Station 4, said she wanted to build a running track behind the building for the firemen.

Her design also calls for large glass doors that would make the fire engines visible from the street.

Subramanian has been thinking about the design for a while but said she spent two nights without sleep to get it ready for the presentation.

Givens said the students were designing buildings to last more than 40 years and were looking for ideas from the local community.

"So much of what the student does is theoretical," Givens said. "They are hoping to get practical feedback."

Allen Chung, a 21-year-old architectural student from Portland, said he's learned that designing a fire station is much more complex than he first thought.

"Overall, it's been a fun project," he said.

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