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City contemplates facelift

It's fashion that counts in new downtown

By Ron Garbinski

The City of Farmington hopes to center its marketing strategy for the redevelopment of the downtown area by attracting more quality fashion apparel stores to the district, according to city officials.

Farmington has a lack of quality fashion stores in its central business district and that appears to be the area's biggest problem," says City Manager Robert Deadman.

The city has the space and resources to support several more of these stores and if we could attract more of them, we would really could show some retail improvements.

At Tuesday's city council meeting, the Farmington Planning Commission will recommend that the city implement a plan that would attract major fashion apparel stores into the central business district at

Grand River and Farmington Roads.

The planning commission's recommendations are based on a study conducted by Howard L. Green and Associates Inc. in conjunction with Christopher Waczy and Associates.

THE REPORT ADVISED the city to adopt a strategy that would draw the type, quality and breadth of fashion apparel stores that trade area residents have the ability to support.

"We are going to try very hard to implement the plan they have recommended," Deadman continues.

"This city could generate more revenue if it had more of a selection in fashion stores so residents won't have to leave the community to shop for clothes.

The commission would like to see Farmington develop into a business district similar to that of downtown Birmingham or Dearborn. Both of these areas have many quality fashion stores," he explains.

The downtown area needs something that will provide a better customer draw. There are adequate rental structures available now for new clothing stores.

We feel if we invite these new companies to locate in our central shopping area we will draw a better selection of shops that will draw more people into the city to do their shopping," the city manager says.

Green and Associates plan some of its retailing market penetration and extending the downtown trade area. Implementation of this strategy calls for the development of a coordinated approach to draw fashion retailers into the area.

The city would solicit tenancies from fashion apparel retailers currently unrepresented in the trade area.

We also would need the cooperation of the merchants already operating in the city in order to provide an environment

that is compatible with our goal of opening more fashion stores," says Deadman.

The study's timetable calls for the city to implement its development strategy before the opening of the new Non-Regional Shopping Center, so that Farmington can be established as a major fashion retailing area.

Green and Associates believe that the plan should be undertaken before customer patterns of mall shopping are developed around the mall center as well as other area complexes.

The Farmington area has more convenient goods stores than major specialty shops. What we want to do is improve the image and make it stronger. The city has too much of one type of store and that might be hindering our marketing potential," Deadman adds.

Above all we have to offer residents more than one place to shop by providing them with a selection of stores in shop at

THE CRUCIAL ASPECT to the whole plan is whether the city can attract those specialty clothing stores, Farmington has to make the central business district a strong market area if it wants to see the city grow and prosper," explains the city manager.

The city possibly could use a major large volume food chain in the area too. Farmington could expect several major results if they successfully implemented the marketing plan," credits Green and Associates of Bloomfield Hills.

Sales of existing buildings would satisfy current retail potential in the trade area. Farmington's share of its retailer market also would be expected to increase, the report says.

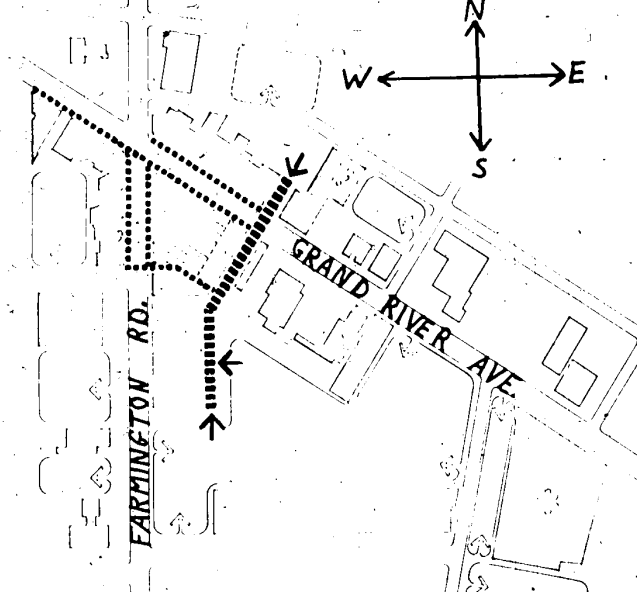
A new fashion store in the downtown area would attract related fashion and specialty merchants to vacant or underutilized spaces in the business district. Sales potential and market penetration

of existing specialty stores would be increased by the customer draw of a fashion apparel store. The potential for increased sales in the district also could result in greater demand for marketing space in the downtown area.

The firm prepared three alternative marketing options, but the planning commission decided that this plan would be the most flexible and effective for the Farmington area.

Other recommendations were to replace the downtown's major store and vacant rental spaces with other uses with larger food, drug, hardware and related convenience goods stores.

Replacing vacant stores spaces with other area merchants and the city council decided to make a united effort to redempt the central business district.



Pedestrians are being kept in mind as the City of Farmington studies plans to redesign the downtown area, centering at Farmington and Grand-River. The dotted broken line indicates where the study recommends developing walkways to make it easier for shoppers to get around.

Plan has folks in mind with pedestrian walk

A plan for a well designed downtown area with people in mind will be presented to Farmington City Council this week.

While most area merchants are concerned about the appearance of the Farmington downtown district, the design phase of the city's redevelopment will depend most entirely on local businessmen.

"We also have received design recommendations from the consulting firm in relation to the downtown area. The extent of the change will depend a great deal on how much area merchants are willing to take upon themselves to change," explains Robert Deadman, city manager.

"We really don't know yet how merchants will respond to the plan because it hasn't received formal city council approval and hasn't been implemented. But the planning commission and I favor the recommendations and we hope the council will, too," he continues.

The design redevelopment plan for downtown is part of a retail and design alternatives study conducted for the city by Howard L. Green and Associates Inc.

According to the report, the design recommendations will contribute to the establishment of stronger image and visual identity for the Farmington downtown district.

The retail phase of the overall redevelopment plan is to attract more fashion apparel stores into the central business area.

Both design and retail recommendations included in the report will be presented to the city council at Tuesday's meeting at 7 p.m.

Fixing up the downtown area is one of the major goals of the planning commission. Its results will depend on whether local merchants and building owners want to spend the money to make the area more aesthetically pleasing, Deadman says.

Both the retailing and design plans play important roles in the redevelopment of the area. Along with making a strong retail area, we must make an area that is pleasing for shoppers and businessmen.

The primary physical problem of the downtown area is that buildings are close to one another, but there is weak pedestrian linkage between the centers.

THE REPORT RECOMMENDS that the city establish a landscaped pedestrian oriented system of walkways with access between all areas of the downtown district.

The entire downtown area is crisscrossed by an inadequate vehicle flow pattern which distributes traffic to the various retail and service establishments according to the report.

To all ease the problem, the report suggests improving the present parking situa-

tion by redefining and providing new patterns of pedestrian movement. It also recommends acquiring land where additional parking space is needed.

The report also calls for a more satisfactory pedestrian environment in the central business district. By creating environmental conditions that encourage pedestrian linkage between the city's parking lots and those areas with reduced parking space, a new pedestrian flow pattern should develop.

Green and Associates recommend that the city establish a people space area located in the south-east quadrant of Farmington and Grand-River just behind the Village Arcade.

This area would function as a landscaped pedestrian oriented open space.

This pedestrian oasis, together with the

(Continued on page 14)

How experts feel

General merchandise apparel and yard goods stores show potential for greater retail sales beyond the level currently attained in the downtown Farmington area, a recent study reveals.

Compared to competing shopping centers nationally, the space utilization of convenience and specialty retail stores in the Farmington district are over-represented.

There is an unbalanced mix of food, drug, art, crafts, gift and office-supply stores as compared to general retail and fashion apparel stores, reports Howard L. Green and Associates Inc.

The consulting firm recently completed a study for the City of Farmington as part of the city's master plan to redevelop its downtown area.

The study shows that popular priced apparel and convenience stores are well represented in centers surrounding Farmington, such as Sears and Cowles, at Livonia and the Mall, Crowleys, at Kendallwood Mall and the two major K-Mart Centers.

These stores are close enough to the Farmington area that city residents can shop there conveniently. But Farmington's downtown district is without the better quality fashion apparel stores.

The decay of the downtown's retail base is due in part to the result of the weak draw and low market penetration of the Downtown Farmington Center. The firm says.

Efforts to improve the center should be undertaken as part of the city's overall program to improve the entire downtown retail market penetration, the report says.

While rental rates for retail store fronts in the central business district are low, as required in suburban areas, per cent of the total 300,000 square feet of building area in the central district is vacant.

The Downtown Farmington Center which accounts for two-thirds of the central business district's leaseable retail area is anchored by the Federal Department Store, a professional apartment store with an emphasis on moderate priced apparel.

The report concludes that the opening of the new K-Mart Store on Grand River near Highland has eroded Federal's merchandise power in the city.

A pair of downtown shoppers shows that 43 per cent of Farmington's retail trade is comprised of shoppers from Farmington, the Hills and Livonia usually residing in the north of Five Mile.

In 1973, the population of Farmington's trade area is 128,280. The 1973 census showed the 1968 median family income in the area was \$18,735 or 38 per cent above the metropolitan Detroit average.

Also in 1973, sales in the Downtown Farmington Center were estimated to have been \$13.5 million. This total was evenly divided between convenience goods stores and shopping goods stores.

This was three per cent of the trade-area residents' estimated \$331.5 million expenditures for retail goods and services.

The market share attained by convenience goods stores and shopping goods stores in the different sections of the trade area were almost identical.

This pattern is contrary to that of a strong downtown business trade area for shopping goods stores and a more retail convenience store trade area, the report says.

The downtown Farmington retail core includes the three corners of Farmington and Grand-River intersection. Only the northwest corner level has intersection without a retail firm.

World of music

Kids tune up to sound of symphony

By Corinne Abatt

A little girl from Farmington Beechwood Elementary School asked Detroit Symphony clarinetist Paul Schaller a question that had the world's concert greats probably couldn't answer.

A woodland trio from the symphony gave a program at the school this week and answered questions following the performance.

Why, asked the youngster, do all the instruments tune to the "one" Schaller answered. Because the note is less influenced by cold and warm than any other instrument. The others vary more.

Schaller, about 50, is bald and bespectacled. Paul Gannon took turns in seeing the music explaining their instruments. They took them apart, told something of the history of each and demonstrated range and tone.

Gannon said that as a small boy he ambition was to be taller than his bassoon. He explained that in all ways the bassoon is a double instrument and that when he grew older he knew he would never really be tall.

If you add it altogether the bassoon is eight feet long.

AS HE TOOK THE BASSOON apart at sections, Gannon said the German word for bassoon means a bundle of sticks. The French word for the woodwind family is an on with a French duple-ended sound to it.

There was a soprano on an alto on a tenor on and a baritone.

The English didn't want to sound like the French so they pronounced it bassoon, Gannon told the children.

The left thumb controls the keys and the



The bassoon as played by Detroit Symphony musician, Paul Gannon, captures the interest of Beechview Elementary School pupils. Gannon is a member of a symphony woodwind who which performed at the school recently. (Staff photo by Harry Maurice)

Swimming lessons start next month

Recreational swimming for children and adults is every Wednesday evening at the Farmington and North Farmington High School pools.

Family hour is 7:15 p.m. and the adult hour is 8:30-9:45 p.m. There is a 30-cent fee for children and 80-cent fee for adults with special rates for groups.

The program is sponsored by the Farmington Area Recreation Commission.

The Commission will also offer eight weeks of swimming lessons beginning Saturday, March 20.

Registration will be Saturday, March 13 from 9 a.m. to noon at Farmington High School and North Farmington Students should register at the school where they wish to swim. There is an 80-cent charge for the eight-week session. Lessons will be held March 20, 27, April 3, 10, 17, 24, 31, 7, 14, 21, 28, 4, 11, 18, 25, 1, 8, 15, 22.

The schedule is 8:30 a.m. Levels 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6. 10-10:30 a.m. Levels 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. 11-11:30 a.m. Levels 1-10.

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KIDS' WISDOM

Kids say the darned thing. And that's why U.S. Rep. William Brodehead found out when he visited their quarters from Kearsarge Elementary recently. To see what they had to say turn to page 3A.