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Twenty Five Cents

Is Twelve Oaks Mall a threat?

Personal service is key in competition

By LOUISE OKRUTSKY

Farmington merchants say they aren't sitting and waiting for disaster. While the merchants recognize that Novi's Twelve Oaks shopping center will attract some of their customers, most believe that the area and their shops offer things a large downtown—personal service and a small-town atmosphere.

"I would say I'll be strong competition," Ed Balden of the Farmington Shopping Center Co. says. "I think we

have something unique. You can't please everyone. We give personal service to our customers.

Balden believes that the Twelve Oaks Center will take away some of the customers from the Farmington area stores, but new shoppers will discover Farmington as they drive through it on their way to the center, due to open in the fall of 1977.

He has mixed feelings about the Novi center.

"I feel like the guy who sees his new Cadillac with his mother-in-law in it fall off a cliff," he says.

"It'll probably have a lot of effect, at first," Ed Lane of the Farmington Chamber of Commerce says. "We hope the downtown center will keep people there. A brand new center usually draws many people in the first three months."

"WE DON'T KNOW IF IT'LL CHANGE the shopping habits of Farmington," he says. "It's bound to hurt some merchants."

Owners of specialty shops probably won't be hurt much by the center, according to Lane.

"You won't find a Scott Coburn every-where," he says about the city-based jewelry. "Maybe people are turning away from huge shopping centers."

"The shopping center in Northville was successful because people wanted the plastic type of thing that was put into their small town," Leo Malen, owner of the Art Alcove, in the Village Mall, downtown Farmington, says. Malen is the head of the Village Mall's merchants association.

"Twelve Oaks isn't a threat because it's a completely different thing from the Village Mall," he says. "We're so much into specialty outlets, it won't hurt us."

"Farmington, being the town it is, people like the small-town atmosphere," he says.

Malen speculated that Twelve Oaks won't be a great threat unless it offers shoppers bargains.

"I'm able to offer things that no mall type of clothing store can," Fred Rubenstein, owner of Fredrick's of Farmington, says.

"I don't depend on seeing a million people," he explains. "The brands I carry



are the better brands and will not be found in the malls," he says.

"Other Farmington area stores are aware that its moving in will hurt them. But we—we're a master tailor shop. We're on a first name basis with our customers," he continues.

Fredrick's is located at 2854 Orchard Lake Road, Farmington Hills. "I wouldn't want to be in a mall situation," its owner says.

Other owners of shops that don't rely on walk-in trade echo Rubenstein's opinion.

"To be honest, I don't feel it to be an

threat," Lyle LaBelle, owner of LaBelle Lighting, 2881 Orchard Lake Road, says. LaBelle, an area resident, believes that the shopping center should have been accepted by the Farmington area. "It would bring a lot of revenue into the community," he says.

"They could build it right across the street from me and it wouldn't hurt me," Jim Eger, owner of the Main Street, 2854 Orchard Lake, says.

Eger's shop specializes in equipment for fly fishing and he doesn't rely on walk-in trade. "I'm the only one in southwest Michigan."

Everyone who leaves their house to come here knows they'll come here before they leave," he adds.

MOST MERCHANTS AGREED that owners of small clothing stores or shoe stores will find it difficult to compete with the Novi center.

Some merchants recall similar situations with other shopping centers.

"We had a similar situation in Detroit" (Continued on page 24)



Arson attempt

Farmington Hills police and fire departments continued their investigations last week of a suspected arson attempt that gutted an abandoned house on Halstead, just north of Grand

River, that took firemen more than one hour to extinguish Wednesday night. (Staff photo by Harry Mauthe)

Potted plants blossom into interesting hobby

By CORINNE ABATT

One of the fastest growing hobbies is the care and culture of indoor plants. Homes that used to have an African violet or two, maybe a fern or philodendron, now sport elaborate arrangements of potted growing things.

Springbrook Garden owners Mike and Rich Hatfield swear that Farmington customers are some of the most plant-wise persons around.

"We can't play God to our customers anymore," says Rich. "If we stand there telling them how to care for a plant they're buying, we usually find out they already know a lot about it."

The Hatfields used to grow many plants for outdoor gardens. Now they pay more much with indoor varieties. Mike says part of the reason is the rising cost of natural gas to heat large expanses of greenhouses.

Many greenhouse men, whose heating bills were running well into four figures a month, have simply padlocked their doors and closed down.

feet tall, come in 200-gallon containers and retail for \$4,000-5,000.

So far, the Hatfields haven't any customers asking about the large weeping figs but they regularly sell six-to-seven-foot weeping figs for more than \$40.

"Hanging plants are a stable item and right after Easter we will have geraniums and other outdoor hanging plants," Rich says.

The brothers agree that Decoration Day is the time to put plants like geraniums outdoors.

He has a warning.

"People push that date up every year and then keep losing them. By Decoration Day the danger of frost is passed. Often when they come to replace them, it's too late. It's a fast season from about May 30 to the end of June."

THE BROTHERS guess how, and why, they have customers who have become so knowledgeable about plants: the emphasis is now on ecology, children have grown up left and the adults have more time to devote to hobbies and more information is available.

Whatever the reasons for more sophisticated buyers and the upsurge in interest one thing is sure.

"Rich Hatfield says he can no longer stand idly by and tell each customer how to care for a plant. He now often to notice if how much light and what kind of container and soil it needs."

"People are more educated in plants now. They really go into them in depth. They know as much as we do sometimes more."

But, business is good and the brothers aren't complaining.

Suspect nabbed in the bush

David Stark, 23, of Detroit, was released on \$10,000 bond after his arraignment Thursday, April 8, in 47th District Court before Judge Margaret Schaeffer on a charge of unlawfully driving away a motor vehicle.

Stark was arrested Thursday morning by Farmington Public Safety officers after allegedly smashing a stolen pickup truck into a fence and attempting to elude police.

LeVie Newsom, an off-duty Southfield policeman, was returning from work when he noticed someone attempting to gain entry into his nephew's 1975 Ford pickup

truck parked in a driveway near Grand River.

The truck, owned by Brian Newsom, of 3881 Grand River in Farmington, had its rear window broken by Officer Newsom after he fired six shots at the truck while the escaping person apparently tried to run him down.

Newsom said that he observed someone attempting to enter the truck about 3 a.m. Thursday. Newsom pulled his car in behind the parked truck and drew his service revolver as he got out of the car to investigate.

BY THE TIME off-duty Officer Newsom approached the truck, the suspected car thief already was inside the pickup.

Sweeping to the right and jumping the curb in order to drive the truck onto Grand River, the suspect drove by Newsom and sped away into the Chatham Hills subdivision.

Newsom apparently told the man to stop and announced that he was a police officer.

Newsom said that the man allegedly tried to run him over. (Continued on page 24)



In the shade of the old weeping fig sits florist Rick Hatfield of Farmington. This is one of a very popular variety of trees potted and cultivated to live indoors. (Staff photo by Harry Mauthe)

Hills probes transportation needs

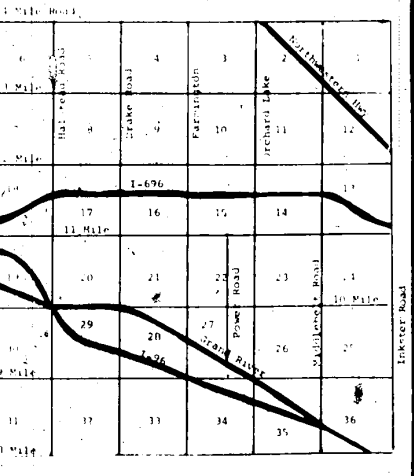
This is a survey being taken by the City of Farmington Hills and the Farmington area Recreation Commission to explore transportation needs of senior residents.

Those who wish to participate in the study may simply call the city offices 474-0115 extension 29, and ask for Donna. With this questionnaire in front of a telephone, Donna will record answers as the caller gives them to her. Calling hours are 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. weekdays.

SENIOR CITIZEN TRANSPORTATION SURVEY

What is your address?

- 1) In which area of the city do you live in? (Choose the correct section number from the map.)
- 2) Would you be interested in using a public transportation system? (Answer yes or no.)
- 3) To which area would you most likely travel? (List as many section numbers from the map as needed, starting with the areas to which you would go most frequently and ending with those which you would visit least often.)
- 4) I would use this transportation for the following reasons. (Choose from the list: Doctor, Recreation, Pharmacy, Shopping, General travel. Please list others.)
- 5) I would use the transportation system (List one: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 or more times per week.)
- 6) What time of day would you most likely use the system? (List one or more: 8 a.m.-11 a.m., 11 a.m.-2 p.m., 2 p.m.-5 p.m., 5 p.m.-8 p.m., 8 p.m.-10 p.m.)
- 7) Which type of service would you prefer? (List as many letters as needed from the list: Local bus in Farmington Hills area; Dial-a-Ride; a group vehicle dispatched to caller's home on demand, when allowable time; Taxi service; "a group" semi-taxi service; Car pool; Your own car. Please rate them in order, from the most desirable to the least desirable.)
- 8) Are there other methods of transportation available to you? (Answer yes or no.)
- 9) Would you like to see regular service to a specific location initiated? (Answer yes or no. If your answer is yes, what is the location?)
- 10) Would you require any special type of accommodation to allow you to travel? (Answer yes or no. If your answer is yes, explain.)
- 11) Would you be willing to pay a percentage of the cost of operating a transportation service? (Answer yes or no.)
- 12) What is your age?
- 13) What day of the week would you most likely desire to travel? (List as many days as needed in order of most importance and least importance.) Additional comments are welcome.



inside

FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL

It's time again for kindergarten registration in the Farmington district. See how William Grace Elementary answers questions about the early years of school on Page 3A.

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