

Farmington Observer

Volume 95 Number 83

Thursday, July 26, 1984

Farmington, Michigan

72 Pages

Twenty-Five Cents

Festival rebound lauded

By Jean Adamczak
staff writer

Farmington's 29th Founders Festival is just a memory to most people, but to festival president Jon Grant, the event was a "smashing success."

Grant estimates about 250,000 people attended the various events throughout the five day celebration.

"I've heard nothing but positive things from both city administrations. I have had no complaints about it at all," he says.

Last year's festival came under criticism from merchants in the Downtown Farmington Center. The merchants called the festival "hunky tonk" and claimed the food and craft booths in the mall's parking lot seriously affected the business of the shops located there.

"THE COMPLAINTS weren't totally unjustified," says Grant.

"We (the festival committee) were well aware we made a lot of mistakes in the Downtown Farmington Center last year."

The problem was eliminated this year by limiting entries of food booths to local clubs and organizations.

"We cut the number of people selling food by about 50 percent. We also looked a lot more crafters than we did before," Grant explains.

"We juried to the arts and crafts this year and put a lot of emphasis on upgrading that end of it."

GRANT, PRESIDENT of Reliance Forms & Supplies Inc., says he tries to run the festival as a business, even though it's main purpose is not to make money. The festival is a non-profit organization.

"The main purpose of the festival this year was to create a better feeling in the community about the festival and to create an opportunity for the service clubs and organizations to raise funds for their charities and to bring in a big crowd to the business community," Grant says.

Grant estimates the gross income of this year's festival to be "about \$25,000" adding that last year's expenses were \$24,000.

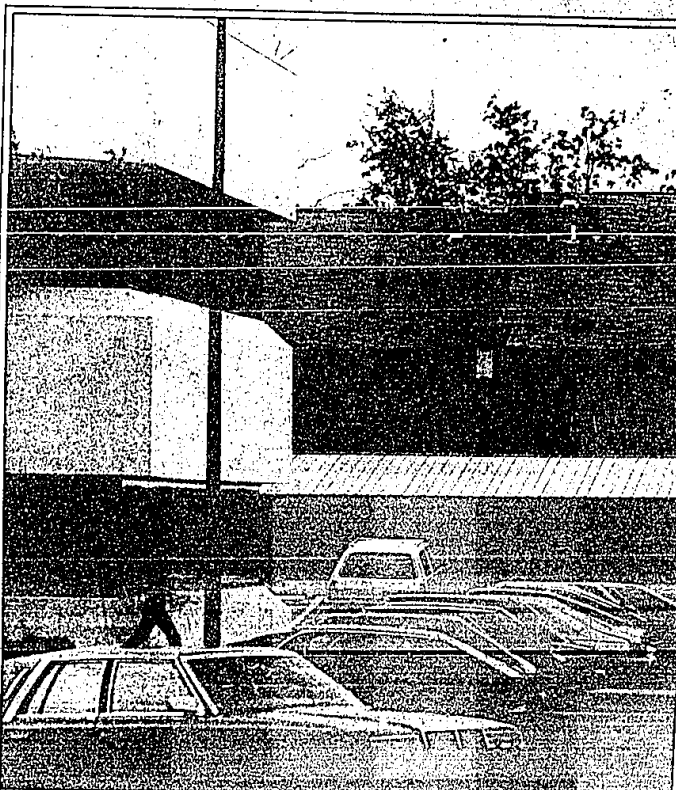
"I FEEL we're going to be in the black — just barely. If the festival had gone in the red last year it is doubtful it would have held this year at all."

The major expenses incurred by the festival include \$4,800 for a fireworks display and music; \$5,000 for a parade; \$2,500 to insure the public picnic printing and postage costs, says Grant.

"Getting the Downtown Farmington Center set up with tents, chairs, electrical equipment and so on, runs between \$4,000-\$5,000 alone."

MONEY FOR the festival is accumulated through various channels, including solicitation of donations from the local business community; a raffle held by the festival committee; rental of booth space; a parking fee for the fireworks; a concessions stand operated by the committee at the fireworks; and a carnival held this year at the Farmington Plaza.

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RANDY BOSTAK/staff photographer

What was once rural scenery along Northwestern Highway in Farmington Hills is now decorated with aesthetically pleasing office buildings. But

many of the new developments sit close to residential areas. Here the new Bazook-Bostak development sits close to the Summit apartments.

Boom town corridors set pace

Editor's note: Following is the first in a series of stories about the economic development of Farmington Hills along Northwestern Highway and the 12 Mile Road corridors. The series will discuss the history behind the development, why industry is coming to this area, how it affects Farmington Hills today and what economic development concepts are planned for the future.

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

With three million square feet of office space — and the promise of more in the near future — Farmington Hills has come a long way since the days when it was considered to be too far from Detroit's commercial and office hub.

The Northwestern Highway corridor and the 12 Mile growth corridor — are commanding the attention of developers and corporate leaders.

While Oakridge Lake Road with its strip malls and small offices has been Farmington Hills' business district, Northwestern and 12 Mile are now getting the headlines.

In 1984, Farmington Hills contained 33 office buildings. Of those, 21 were on Northwestern or 12 Mile, according to statistics listed in The Detroit, a Greater Detroit Chamber of Commerce guide to office buildings.

In 1983, on the other hand, the number of office buildings climbed from 33 to 41. Of those, 27 were in the two growth corridors.

These totals exclude the Alexander Hamilton Business Co. buildings and the smaller offices on 12 Mile east of Farmington Road. The 12 Mile growth corridor is west of Farmington Road.

While both thoroughfares are growing at a rate Farmington Hills officials consider appropriate, Northwestern and 12 Mile are different in their history, planned uses, aesthetics, costs, types of businesses they attract and their futures.

On Northwestern, smaller "investor type" buildings with a number of tenants are nestled into aesthetically pleasing landscaping. But unlike the 12 Mile corridor, the offices along Northwestern sit close to the longstanding neighborhoods of the former village of Wood Creek Farms.

THE ROOTS of development along Northwestern grew out of controversy, which pitted teachers' union veterans and village residents against developers. The controversy eventually went to court.

When the State Supreme Court was facing the battle between the business section of Northwestern was being developed, the village would soon become the city of Farmington Hills and because the traffic was too heavy for single-family houses.

In the end, residents settled for controlled office development along their one-time rural corridor.

The 12 Mile corridor — the city's last area other than industrial parks for office development — has been far less controversial.

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Battle recalled to save Northwestern

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

When John O'Brien moved to the village of Wood Creek Farms 22 years ago to revel in a rural atmosphere, he would have been shocked to know that nearby Northwestern Highway — the road that led to the Oakland County lakes — would someday be adorned with multi-million dollar office buildings.

"It's dumbfounding right now to look at it," said O'Brien. "It's almost fantastic the way it was and the way it is now."

To village residents, Northwestern, with its tree-laden and mostly vacant lots, represented exactly the atmosphere that drew them to Wood Creek Farms in the first place.

BUT THE desires of village residents, most of whom moved to the affluent and restricted area in the 1940s, clashed with progress, the suburban commercial spread and the incorporation of the city of Farmington Hills.

"We were a village. Northwestern Highway split the village in a diagonal. People were anti . . . they wanted it to be a residential, rural area. Very restricted," O'Brien said. "We did attempt to restrict any type of commercial building."

ALTHOUGH VILLAGE leaders and residents put up a tough fight in the

"People were anti . . . they wanted it to be a residential, rural area. Very restricted. We did attempt to restrict any type of commercial building."

— John O'Brien,
Wood Creek resident

years before and immediately after cityhood, they proved to be no match for courts that sided with developers who argued there was no place for residential zoning along the Northwestern corridor. They sensed it would be a gold mine.

"It was pretty hard to hold it," said Farmington Hills City Clerk Floyd Cairns.

The first straw to weaken the strong rural residential atmosphere was the sale to a developer of what was called the Dean Farm, off 12 Mile Road, O'Brien said.

STILL, BY the time Farmington Hills incorporated in 1973, only two commercial developments stood along the village segment of Northwestern. Developer (and then village resident) Paul Imman set up a building on 12 Mile and Northwestern. What is now

the Glasser Building stood at Inkster and Northwestern.

While the village continued its plans to maintain single-family use along Northwestern, owners of the frontage property at first tried to have the land rezoned to office. When local officials continued to deny the requests, the developers went to court.

"OUR LITTLE association fought the fly-by-nighters," O'Brien said. "They were afraid of any (commercial) encroachment either north or south of Wellington and Old Colony which came out on Northwestern at that time."

Early plans for Northwestern to become a freeway extending north, however, helped developers convince the courts that, with the increasing traffic volume, potential homeowners would

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oral quarrel

What's your view of 1984 Festival?

"Smashing success" were the words Jon Grant, president of the 1984 Farmington Founders Festival, used to describe this year's event, which ended Sunday.

Grant was heard about the way the event was run.

HOW DID THE 1984 FOUNDERS FESTIVAL COMPARE TO PAST YEARS?

VALERIE DEWOLFE

To answer this question, call 777-8480 any time between 9 a.m. Friday, July 27, to 9 p.m. Saturday, July 28, or see her at the festival booth at the Farmington Plaza on Sunday.

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Duke defends abstentions

By Steve Barnaby

Planning commissioner Tom Duke has lashed out at city council criticism of his voting record, saying he is being victimized by election-season politics.

Duke, a real estate broker, has been accused of voting on numerous planning commission matters by, among others, Councilman Robert Amador, who is standing for re-election this year.

Former planning commissioner Ben Marks, also a council hopeful, has questioned Duke's ability to function as planning commissioner because Duke

consistently votes Farmington City. Appointed earlier this year, Duke had had to abstain on two issues that were before the body.

"We often have 10 to 25 items on an agenda. There's over 100 subjects listed. I've been on the committee. I've also chaired or cosponsored items," said Duke in a recent interview.

Amador said he was voting based on saying that abstaining is the honorable and prudent course of action.

"It's not unusual to have to abstain. Other people on the commission have had their problems with this also. I have."

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