

Capital improvements ahead for Hills

Continued from Page 1

"It is perceived as a quasi-urban, rural-mix lifestyle. It's a blending of suburban-type living with all the amenities of urban life available within the community. The community has been perceived as a place where you are urban, yet there is a strong rural mix where people get away from it all in their own neighborhood."

While maintaining the city's character and providing for safe and orderly growth is an objective, "I don't think it's a job that's going to be easy," Costick said.

EXTERNAL FACTORS, particularly the growth in surrounding communities Novl, West Bloomfield Township and Southfield — will have an impact on Farmington Hills, Costick said.

One big question, he said, is how traffic generated from growth in neighboring communities will affect Farmington Hills' already congested road system.

"In 1986, we have to get involved with neighboring communities. We have to be more concerned with development on our borders. Maybe we won't be able to do anything about it. But we have to recognize the impact. Where we used to be on the fringe, we are now more in the hub," Costick said.

In 1985, Farmington Hills experienced its busiest year in construction. The city issued 646 single-family

building permits, making 1985 the second biggest year in residential construction. Permits for 1,494 multiple units — condominiums, apartments cluster houses — were issued.

Sites were approved for a total of 775 hotel/motel rooms. And permits for 280,000 square feet of industrial use and another 1.1 million square feet of office development were issued. Permits were also issued for six new commercial buildings.

"It was a balance this year of quite a bit of everything. Annual trends is expected to continue this year," said Richard Lamp, community development manager.

WHILE INCREASES in construction certainly shine a bright light on the city's growing tax base, it also prompts the need for major improvements in roads, drainage, beautification and other improvements that will be required to meet the community's needs, Costick said.

"As I look to 1986, we are going to have to spend a good deal of time, especially in early 1986, reassessing priorities for capital improvements," Costick said. "Financing these improvements is going to be important as we look ahead."

In 1985, the Farmington Hills City Council levied one mill for capital improvements. While Costick sees the need to continue levying the mill specifically for improvements, he says he has "no feeling" at this point

whether the council will ask for more money. "Certainly, the increase in development brings new tax dollars to the city. But the booming growth also brings problems that require costly improvements," Costick said.

Some major improvements that began in 1985, and are expected to continue or be completed in 1986, include the new police facility, implementation of the Oakland County-sponsored E-9-1-1 emergency telephone system, the 12 mile master traffic plan, and proposed I-696 improvements, highlighted by two new interchanges near Haggerty and Drake.

1985 BROUGHT greater city attention to major road problems in Farmington Hills. In 1986, Costick hopes to "re-establish a priority for major road improvements. We are going to be working on a systematic major road improvement program, which we hope to construct in 1986."

The road program is expected to include widening, paving and other safety improvements.

"The community in 1985 began to take on many changes," Costick said. "Traffic became significantly worse. The capital improvements program attempts to address this. I think that's the key to maintaining quality of life as we know it."

The city's six-year capital improvements program documents needed projects, including a tentative timetable for construction. Each year the

state-required plan is updated and a new year of projects is added.

City officials are also eyeing major drain improvements in 1986. Chief among these is the long-standing Caddell drain project in the 10 Mile/Grand River area. Eighty-five-way drains have been acquired and the project has been bid with an eye toward completing the \$5-million construction in 1986. Caddell will serve most of the city's southwest quadrant, Costick said.

"We began to get a better handle on drainage in 1985 and we need, in 1986, to refine and implement some of the master drain plan," Costick added.

WHILE 1985 saw the re-creation of the city's beautification commission, 1986 is expected to bring development of a multi-year beautification plan, complete with a strategy for implementation. "I see this as a major thrust and hope we will see some major improvements," Costick said.

Recreation will also be a major thrust for the city in 1986 with the proposed completion of a master plan for the 212-acre Spicer property's development.

Also a major focus in 1985 that's expected to continue in 1986 is the city's attempt to better inform the public, particularly through newsletters and public forums designed to solicit residents' comments on various issues. "I think we have significantly improved our communication with the public," Costick said.

Developer buys auctioned parcel

A recently purchased 7.46-acre parcel in Farmington Hills most likely will remain zoned single-family residential (RA-1), according to city zoning supervisor Hal Rowe.

Franklin resident Jack Peltz purchased the vacant property for \$115,000 at a Dec. 16 auction held by the Michigan Department of Transportation. Peltz could not be reached for comment regarding his purchase intent or development plans.

The parcel, between 8 and 9 Mile, east of the I-96/I-275 interchange, is landlocked, according to Rowe. Peltz pays taxes on another vacant, 26-acre parcel to the south, according to infor-

mation from the Farmington Hills assessor's office. Franklin resident Paul Schoeffel said he is aware of Peltz's ownership of the 26-acre parcel, but added, "I do not know of any plans at the present time," he said. "He has not discussed it with me."

"There would have to be some pretty compelling reasons to change from the master (land use) plan," Rowe said, referring to any possible zoning change. The master plan calls for residential development on both Peltz-owned parcels.

A zoning change is "not in the cards," Rowe added.

Downtown is city focus in '86—Deadman

Continued from Page 1

Ongoing projects and monitoring of roads, sidewalks, and water and sewer systems will continue in 1986. In a tri-governmental effort between Farmington, Farmington Hills and Oakland County, engineering plans and cost estimates for the widening of county-owned Orchard Lake Road will be finalized up in the coming year, Deadman said. Work is currently underway on a right-of-way study from Grand River to I-696.

THE GOVERNMENTS are seeking 70 percent federal funding for the widening project, which has been estimated to cost \$3 million without right-of-ways. "Two million dollars per mile is getting to be pretty standard," Deadman said. The remaining 30 percent of the

cost will be shared between the local governments.

Road problems throughout southern Oakland County must be dealt with during the next five years, he added. "There are crying needs for road improvements as major arteries get more crowded at peak times. It's not acceptable for people spending one hour or more each way (to work) and waiting two to three light cycles get through intersections."

Property values and subdivisions streets used as shortcuts will suffer without attention to the roads, Deadman said.

The year 1985 brought many good things to this community of "working parents," he said. A four-year anniversary of "no-vehicle fatalities" in the city was noted, and completion of the Farmington Crossroads Shopping Center at 9 Mile and Farmington, offering

a 40,000-square-foot Farmer Jack that will prepare and special order food for customers, Deadman added.

THE GROWTH of Farmington Hills, Novi and other communities west of Farmington has had an impact on growth and traffic patterns in Farmington, Deadman said.

"Prior to 1970, traffic traveling on Grand River turned north or south at Farmington Road. Since 1970, most of the traffic flows west on Grand River."

The resident base is Farmington is "substantially older" than surrounding communities, which Deadman foresees as a possible future problem.

According to the 1980 census, the average age of a Farmington resident was 42. Statistics from one section of the city, west of Drake road,

showed an average age of 50. "We have a lot of empty nests," he said.

Financing the needs of a community on a fixed income in the future could be expensive, Deadman said, as the needs for community recreation and already rising emergency medical increase.

BUT "FAMILIES may once again move in" to Farmington because of diverse housing sizes — from 700 to 3,000 square feet — and current low interest rates, Deadman added. Although Deadman watches the long-term trends, much city planning is based on a short-term view because of the fluctuation of local and state economies from year to year.

Long term, Deadman wants to "make Farmington a very pleasant place to live," by offering good basic services and to "maintain the commercial property base."

Weekend 'super spas' scheduled

"Super Spa Weekends" offered by Gall Greenfield Properties are scheduled for Jan. 24-26 and March 7-9 in Sheraton Oaks, Novi. The weekends includes aerobics, a workout with stretch, jazz dancing, yoga, water exercise, and health lectures, and a fashion show. The program offers the latest information on how to keep fit and gives special information to beginners on

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