

Jobs generated along I-275 corridor, 1B



Baseball is back, 1D

Costs grow for Hills' new police facility, 2A

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At the crossroads I-275 spurs growth, change

By Marie Chestney
staff writer

THE I-275 CORRIDOR — 38 of the hottest miles of freeway in Michigan — starts just north of Monroe and ends abruptly in Novi.

It opened in 1977, when a motorist could drive the stretch and see little but farms, trees and an occasional home.

Today, nine years later, farm land gives way to a steady stream of motels and hotels, restaurants, business complexes, office buildings, condominiums, luxury subdivisions, shopping centers and banks — from Canton Township to Novi.

And on the drawing boards are scores of building projects that are destined to add handsomely to the tax base of Canton and Plymouth townships, Livonia and Farmington Hills.

No wonder the word gold so often comes to mind in describing the area, which has been called "the golden corridor," "a road paved with gold" and "the golden triangle."

"I DON'T KNOW if you can call it 'golden' or not," said Livonia city planner John Nagy.

"There's certainly a lot of pressure for building there. I-275 is going like gangbusters. Builders are waiting in line to acquire land and develop it."

"There's no question they could develop every piece of land they could get their hands on. Values have gone so high — in one recent auction of state land along Haggerty, the actual bid price was twice the estimated value," Nagy said.

But why the sudden interest in a freeway that bypasses metropolitan Detroit?

"ONE OF THE most important reasons that I-275 has had such growth is because it has such excellent access to Metropolitan Airport," said David Nicholson, economic development director for Canton Township.

I-275 also connects with I-94, I-66 and M-14 — roads that lead to Detroit.

"I-275 has tremendous assets," Nicholson said. "It allows people who work in various communities to get to their places of employment almost completely by expressway. They can leave their homes in Canton and be on the expressway in five minutes."

Aaron Machnik, Canton's building director, said, "It offers easy access to all areas for moving products around."

I-275 IS THE western edge of an imaginary triangle that starts at the airport, runs north to Farmington Hills, east to Detroit and back to the airport.

The corridor also offers an easy tie-in to the university research centers of Ann Arbor and the halls of government in Lansing. Some even suggest the corridor will be the new center of Detroit by the year 2000.

Among recent developments in the corridor are:

- In Canton Township — American Yazaki opened last year; Wallside Windows will be building near Yazaki; and an inn will be built at I-275 and Ford Road.

- In Livonia, which has just about run out of

vacant land along the corridor, Victor International is awaiting a land rezoning for a \$200 million to \$300 million corporate office park.

- In Plymouth Township — two office buildings opened in 1985. There are 18 site plans awaiting review.

COMMUNITIES with the welcome mat out for corporate headquarters and high-technology types of business along the corridor must grapple with the following concerns:

- Insuring a good mix of residential/commercial development.
- Forging good relationships between businesses and homeowners.
- Setting building height limits.
- Solving traffic problems.
- Safeguarding the rural "quality of life" in each community.

Building boom hastens Hills development, too

By Casey Hans
staff writer

The six-mile corridor stretching along the western end of Farmington Hills is a related spoke in the wheel of growth that is spreading steadily through the area.

And that wheel keeps rolling. From development at the Southfield and I-696 interchange following World War II, growth moved westward on Northwestern Highway to 12 Mile Road, and to the new so-called epicenter at Eight Mile and Haggerty.

But problems have come with rapid development and growth and must be dealt with by local officials.

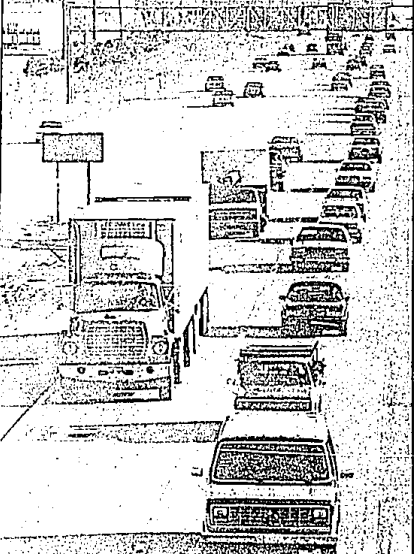
"Our community has changed," said Robert McConnell, president of the Farmington Hills Economic Development Corporation.

The former Farmington Hills mayor, Oakland County commissioner and supervisor of what was formerly Farmington Township recalls what the area used to be like.

"It used to be a bedroom community. Today, Farmington Hills is becoming a commerce center in its own right," he said.

OUTLINING THE city's western boundary — shared with the city of Novi — is Haggerty Road and a portion of I-275 where the interstate ends and merges into the I-696 route for Lansing and Detroit. With the probable death of an I-275 extension north, development along Haggerty road from 12 to 14 Mile roads in the Hills has been primarily residential, with commercial and industrial development stretching south.

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STEVE FECHT/staff photographer

I-275 — once farm land but now a steady stream of hotels, restaurants, office buildings, subdivisions and shopping centers — looking south from 10 Mile Road.

AT THE CROSSROADS

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- Editorial comment on recent developments — 16A
- Working boom means hundreds of new jobs — 1B
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- The road, the boom, its impact on services — 10C

Farmington FOCUS

If you have a news item or an idea for a feature story or an action picture with a Farmington-area connection, send a note to our downtown office at 32303 Grand River, Farmington 48024.

FARMINGTON Hills will become a member of the Western Wayne County Fire Mutual Aid Association following authorization by the city council last week. Under terms of the reciprocal fire aid agreement, "we would formalize a mutual aid pact with the city of Livonia, the township of Northville and the city of Southfield," said City Manager William Costick in a report to the council. Farmington Hills also has mutual aid agreements with Farmington and with the Western Oakland County Mutual Aid Association, which includes both West Bloomfield Township and Novi.

REMINDER: Classes resume Monday, April 7, in all four local school districts: Farmington, Glencoeville, West Bloomfield and Walled Lake.

FOOTNOTES: One year ago this week — Oakland Circuit Judge Alice Gilbert has upheld a Farmington Hills City Council election recount, making Ben Marks the winner by one vote over opponent Terry Sever.

Hills to seek park tax June 24

By Joanne Mallazowski
staff writer

Farmington Hills voters will go to the polls Tuesday, June 24, to consider a special 0.5-mill levy for five years to pay for development of parks and recreation facilities.

In a 6-0 vote Monday, city council members set the special election's date and approved wording of the proposed amendment to the city charter.

The council's action comes on the heels of last week's adoption of the

city's five-year master parks and recreation plan. The master plan also includes development plans for the 212-acre, newly named Heritage Park, purchased from the Elston Spicer estate in June 1985. The park is on the west side of Farmington Road, north of 10 Mile.

The proposed 0.5-mill levy is expected to garner in excess of \$3 million over the next five years to develop recreational facilities, including Heritage Park, said Dennis Fitzgerald, Farmington Hills Parks and Recreation Commission chairman.

The proposed 0.5-mill levy (per \$1,000 of assessed valuation) will cost Farmington Hills taxpayers based on an \$80,000 house assessed at \$40,000 — approximately \$20 a year, or \$1.67 a month for five years, Farmington Hills finance director Charles Rosch said.

IF PASSED, the proposed levy would be the first such special tax dedicated for a specific purpose in the city's history.

The city's last request for a special levy was in 1984 when Farmington Hills voters defeated a request for 1.5 mills for 20 years for capital improvements.

Because the proposed facilities and improvements in the master parks and recreation plans total more than an estimated \$7 million, revenue from the special levy would pay for only a portion of the proposed improvements.

A five-year action program included in the master plan lists 21 proposed projects and improvements for parks and recreation. The first nine listed are considered priority projects — totaling approximately \$3 million — that would be started if voters approve the special levy, said Douglas Gaynor, director of the special services department.

The proposed projects include:

- Construction of a sports field — three soccer fields, two baseball/softball fields, fitness trail and picnic area — on the northeast corner of 13 Mile and Farmington roads. Estimated cost is \$310,000.
- Upgrading 16 Farmington Public Schools sites, including grading and drainage of fields. Estimated cost is \$80,000.
- Construction of storage buildings for youth athletic programs. Estimated cost is \$10,000.
- Site development at Heritage Park, including park entrance, main road, gate, sign and landscaping. Estimated cost is \$274,000.
- Development of nature, hiking and cross country ski trails and strolling hills in Heritage Park. Estimated cost is \$137,000.
- Development of picnic areas, picnic shelters and playgrounds in Heritage Park. Estimated cost is \$225,000.
- Development of native species arboretum in Heritage Park. Estimated cost is \$28,800.
- Renovation of estate house for meetings and administrative headquarters and renovation of sheep barn into cultural arts facility in Heritage Park. Estimated cost is \$396,100.

Farmington Hills Parks and Recreation Commission is studying the possibility of including the estate house in the city's historic district.

- Construction of a visitor center in Heritage Park. The center would include an interpretative center, meeting rooms, an office, a

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Up close

State of the cities is examined

"We as cities must continue on. With all this uncertainty (relating to federal legislation), it makes it difficult for us planning for the coming year."

— William Hartsock
Farmington mayor



National League of Cities conference in Washington, D.C. Although many local projects are proceeding without federal help, officials remain concerned about the impact of the Gramm-Rudman budget-cutting law and recently passed tax reform legislation.

are "the most affecting our cities that has ever been before Congress," Hartsock told the group. "They present a great deal of problems for us."

The Gramm-Rudman budget-cutting act — passed last December and which took effect March 1 re-

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