

Landscape architect John Grissim works in his Farmington hills office. The large drawing at the rear of his desk is a new landscaping plan for Harrison High. RANDY BORSI/staff photographer

District spruces school sites

By Susan Buck
staff writer

Eleven Farmington Public School sites will see landscaping improvements this year, with Harrison High School reaping the most benefits. "Over the years, there has been a general criticism of the look of our buildings as it relates to landscaping," said superintendent Michael Flanagan. "This will go a long way."

Farmington school board members approved landscape plans last Tuesday upon the recommendation of John Grissim & Associates, a Farmington Hills-based landscape consultant with whom they contracted last spring.

The landscape design development plans will cost nearly \$300,000 for the 11 schools. The board vote was unanimous.

After these 11 design plans are sent out for bid, planning will begin for the remaining seven school sites in the district. The total projected budget is still viable to complete the remaining sites, according to Grissim who presented his report at the board meeting.

WORK SHOULD begin by early spring and be completed by early summer, said Don Cowan,

director of operations and student services for the district.

Besides Hillside Elementary which is under construction, the newest school in the district is Woodcreek Elementary, which is 20 years old. Flanagan added:

- Elementary schools — Beechview, \$31,103; Gill, \$21,753; Larkshire, \$14,575; Loogacre, \$20,130; and William Grace, \$19,965.
- Middle schools — East, \$16,520; Power, \$31,600; and Warner \$33,297.
- High schools — Harrison, \$89,740.
- Other buildings: Cloverdale Training Center, \$17,408; and Farmington Community School, \$18,997.

Site plans, some of which include improved drainage plans have been completed. These plans were reviewed by staff, building principals and representatives from parent-teacher organizations, Grissim said.

THE PLANS include planting and trimming of shade trees, planting of evergreen and annuals; seeding; adding benches; addition of flagpoles; grading of play areas; and laying topsoil. Some

picnic tables will be added at Power Middle School as well as wrought iron fencing at Harrison High School.

"Kids go to school fall, winter and spring, when it's wet, Grissim said. "We want to regrade the play areas so that when the kids go out to play, they are not in mud."

Grissim said that all trees will be inspected in the nursery to make sure quality stock is obtained. In the past, trees were park grade, he said.

"Almost every site is clay soil," Grissim said. John Grissim & Associates is the 1989 recipient of the annual American Association of Nurserymen award. Grissim and a client will travel to the White House in May to receive the award from First Lady Barbara Bush honoring landscape work completed on The Gardens, a Palm Beach Gardens, Florida regional fashion shopping center.

Grissim's company also won similar national awards in 1971 for SeaWorld in Ohio and Florida; and in 1984 for Whilpool's world headquarters in Benton Harbor. These awards were presented by First Ladies Pat Nixon and Nancy Reagan.

Woman ticketed for store crash

By Casey Hans
staff writer

The woman who drove through the front wall and into the dressing rooms of the T.J. Maxx store in downtown Farmington last week has been ticketed for careless driving, according to Farmington police.

Virginia Veronica Britt-Stricklen, 54, of Detroit was issued a careless driving citation for her part in the incident.

Three people, including the driver, received minor injuries Jan. 19 when a Mercedes-Benz crashed through the front wall of the store in the Downtown Farmington Center shortly after noon.

FAIRMINGTON DEPUTY director of public safety, Gary Goss, said it was common for police to investigate such an incident for several days before issuing a citation. He said police needed to get statements from witnesses and others involved. Careless driving is a civil infraction.

According to police, Britt-Stricklen backed her son's 1986 Mercedes-Benz into a parking place in front of the store. When she stepped out, the car started to move forward. She got back in and backed up, hitting either a snowbank or curb, then put the car in forward apparently hit the accelerator instead of the break, sending the car barreling through the front of the building. Police said there were acceleration marks at the scene.

The car went through a plywood partitioned wall, traveling about 100 feet from the parking space, landing about 40 feet into the store. The car

Three people, including the driver, received minor injuries Jan. 19 when a Mercedes-Benz crashed through the front wall of the store in the Downtown Farmington Center shortly after noon.

door was open and Britt-Stricklen's foot out of the car as she drove through the wall, causing injury to her ankle and foot.

Also injured were shoppers Bridget Cullen, 25, of Farmington Hills and Laurie Butler, 33, of Farmington. Both were treated at Botsford General Hospital and released.

John Arruda, vice president of marketing for the Boston-based T.J. Maxx, called damage to the store "minor," but was unable to offer a dollar amount.

"Fortunately, no one was seriously injured," he said. The incident affected only the ladies swimwear department of the store, which he expected to be fully restocked and opened over the past weekend.

The store was closed the afternoon of the incident, but reopened last Tuesday at 10:30 a.m. "We wouldn't open it until it was structurally safe," Arruda added.

Local store officials said they could not comment.

Student hired as TV intern

Armond Molino, a 1989 graduate of The Spec Howard School of Broadcast Arts in Southfield, was hired as a paid intern in news at WKBD-TV, Channel 50 in Southfield.

Molino, of Farmington Hills, was a student of the Radio and Television Broadcast program at Specs Howard.

The Specs Howard School is a private vocational school, offering communication students hands-on training through two courses of study: Radio and Television Broadcasting and Broadcast Electronics. Founded in 1970, the school is accredited by the accrediting committee of the National Association of Trade and Technical Schools.

Man asks tougher checks

Continued from Page 1

EDISON spokeswoman Mary Kay Bean said a company investigation suggested a combination of high winds and an accumulation of corrosion on the base caused the pole to topple into the road.

'At first I was relieved that I was not hurt, but then I became angry that the company would allow such a situation to occur.'

— Mark Kerstein

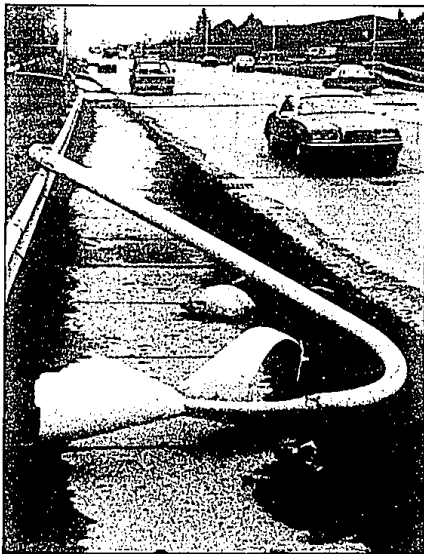
"We have thousands of light poles in the Wayne-Monroe district alone and each is inspected and painted every three to seven years. This is not the first time a light pole has fallen, but it certainly is not a regular occurrence."

Bean said she knew of no plans on the part of the utility to increase its inspection schedule.

"It is my understanding that the company believes the current maintenance and inspection program is adequate."

For his part, Kerstein said he no longer will take the safety of the light poles for granted.

"I guess people have to keep one eye on the road and the other toward the sky. The next time this happens somebody may not be so lucky."



MARK KERSTEIN

A fast swerve allowed a Farmington Hills man to avoid being injured when a Detroit Edison light pole toppled into Farmington Road north of Seven Mile in Livonia.

State examines its signs

Continued from Page 1

on Saturday, according to MDOT director James Plitz. Temporary signage was to be installed to guide drivers, although in each case only one of three interchange signs was affected.

MDOT also has started ultrasonic testing of the sign bolts, which is expected to take two weeks to complete.

"We already know if there is a serious problem," Plitz said. "In the long range we want to know if one is going to become a problem."

Using extreme high frequency sound waves, the ultra sound tests are similar to those conducted at many area hospitals, MDOT managing engineer James Culp said.

Outside contractors erect signs,

'We already know if there is a serious problem. In the long range we want to know if one is going to become a problem.'

— James Plitz
MDOT director

MDOT officials said, though signs must meet department specifications.

High strength steel rods, sunk into the signs' concrete base, could have been knocked out of alignment as support poles and signs were at-

tached, MDOT officials said.

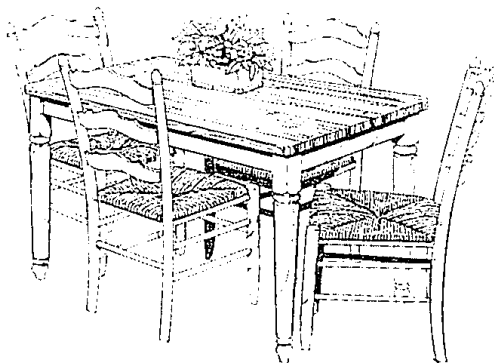
If a weakness is discovered, MacCreedy said, the concrete base will be destroyed and the rods sent to a private metallurgical laboratory for evaluation.

Twenty-three signs were replaced, for various reasons, during the state's last inspection in 1983-85, MacCreedy said. That inspection also featured ultra sound equipment.

Most of the signs were erected between 1972-80, MacCreedy said, though similar signs are still being erected.

Can'tilever signs' design allows them to be placed off the edge of pavement to give automobiles a "free clear zone" should they slide off road, MDOT officials said.

"It really was a safety step," MacCreedy said.



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