

A Grand idea Main street to be examined

Hey, how about that! Our very own Grand River Avenue is going under the microscope, so to speak, next month. The main drag will become the subject of a study by architectural and design students at Lawrence Technological University.

LTU students, under the direction of Professor Will Allen, will take a long look at the former Indian trail that became a plank road and then U.S. Highway 16, the main road from Detroit to Lansing and points northwest.

As was reported in the Dec. 26 Farmington Observer, the students will begin the study in January and report their findings in May. They'll be looking at houses, storefronts, signs, parking and landscaping.

They'll examine ways to improve things along Grand River from Drake Road to Orchard Lake Road. That strip takes in most of commercial Farmington, including downtown, and a lot of residential areas, too.

Now, first of all, we commend the Farmington Beautification Commission, whose officials arranged the cooperative venture with LTU. There are many good reasons to cooperate.

Hopefully, the study will provide a fresh look at our town by youthful outsiders who won't be putting out any gushy press releases afterward.

"They can come out and call it like it is," said Jim Abernethy, an LTU professor from Farmington and a former member of the city planning commission. "That's the beauty of academic freedom."

And let's be honest about it: While much of the Grand River corridor is pleasing to look at with its historic homes and buildings, other parts are looking a bit down at the heels.

Here are some questions and comments we'd like to submit to the folks who'll soon be on

■ **Has Grand River (and Farmington) become an "oxbow" now that I-696 has replaced Grand River as the main road west and northwest?**

Grand River with their pencils and clipboards: ■ Has Grand River (and Farmington) become an "oxbow" now that I-696 has replaced Grand River as the main road west and northwest? If so, is there any way road and town can somehow benefit from this backwater status?

■ Does Farmington suffer because Grand River, following the Indian trail that followed the streams, happens to run on a diagonal, thus creating lots of odd-sized parcels and sharp corners?

■ Does the fact that so many historic homes are located near the business district create a problem? Has Farmington's history been sacrificed for development's sake?

■ Is there a parking problem in downtown Farmington? Most people would say no, but just ask some business people on the north side of Grand River where parking is limited to the rear.

■ Would the street and town be better off if more heavy trucks could somehow bypass the downtown area?

■ So much of Farmington's commerce is off main street in strip malls. Would it be better to have the businesses right on one or two main streets?

■ Does Farmington need some sort of anchor store?

Well, we're excited about the LTU study. We hope it provides something of substance that will benefit our city planners.

Drivers: Heed MADD's message

Thanks to Mothers Against Drunk Driving and law-enforcement agencies throughout the state, the message, it seems, is finally getting through.

We are talking about drinking and driving. Tougher law enforcement and the Mothers Against Drunk Driving-sponsored public awareness campaigns over the last nine years are credited with helping to reduce the number of fatal accidents in Michigan during the New Year's holiday weekend.

Nine years ago MADD started its holiday awareness campaign distributing red ribbons and the slogan of "The One On for Safety" to promote sober, responsible driving during the holiday season.

The red ribbons tied on vehicle antennas, mirrors and doors have a special meaning beyond festive decoration: that motorists support sober driving.

As another New Year approaches, we echo MADD's message and urge motorists to join the Red Ribbon force and resolve to only drive alcohol-free.

As Bethany Goodman, executive director of MADD, Michigan, points out, we've come a long way from a time when holidays were an excuse for irresponsible, intoxicated driving. But we have a long way to go. Drunken drivers are a year-round problem. Continued efforts by civic groups, law-enforcement agencies and the courts are needed in the battle to make our highways safe.

The holidays are still high-risk. If you're host-

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ing a party, MADD offers some tips to follow.

■ Before any drinking begins, make sure there is a designated driver (one who only drinks non-alcoholic beverages) to ensure that friends have a sober ride home.

■ Serve high-protein food to slow alcohol absorption.

■ Offer plenty of non-alcoholic beverages for guests who prefer them.

■ Close the bar at least an hour before the end of the party and serve dessert and coffee instead — but remember, coffee doesn't sober; only time does.

■ Call a cab or offer a free ride home for those without a designated driver.

■ Don't let guests mix their own drinks. Choose a reliable "bartender" who will responsibly pace serving.

■ If, in spite of your efforts, you have an impaired guest, take away the car keys.

As Goodman notes: "Goodwill is at the heart of the holiday spirit. So take the message to heart and 'tie one on for safety.' It's a message of courtesy and caring."

Celebrate in a responsible manner and resolve to "tie one on for safety."



LETTERS

Music was joyful

If you were unable to attend "The Nutcracker and other Sweets" concert Dec. 11 at the Farmington Hills Activities Center, you missed the holiday treat of the season.

Conducted by the skillful hand of Karen Nixon Lane, the Farmington Area Philharmonic provided us with an excellent blend of music ranging from Tchaikovsky's beautiful "Waltz of the Flowers" to Chip Davis' lively "Deck the Halls."

Other familiar holiday selections were incorporated with occasional narrations from Charles Dickens' "A Christmas Carol" and Clement C. Moore's "A Visit from St. Nick." Even the decorations fit the mood of the day: colorfully painted toys and gift packages adorned the walls, and a cleverly constructed giant fireplace on stage made it look like Santa himself might visit any moment.

A musical sing-along arranged especially for this concert by Karen Nixon Lane, was a delightful way to stir up the holiday spirit within the audience.

What a wonderful way for our family to spend a Sunday afternoon. I am happy to have discovered one of Farmington's best-kept secrets. I look forward to future concerts with this excellent philharmonic.

Claudia Buchanan, Farmington Hills

Whether you are a policeman, housewife, businessman, city official, laborer, doctor, lawyer or old, young, sick or unemployed; no matter who you are or what your situation or status in life, you are entitled to respect, dignity and courtesy.

And please remember: We will either hang together or we will hang apart. Happy holidays to all.

Kenneth Kemp, Farmington Hills

Safety on sleds

Farmington Hills Special Services Department wants to thank the Observer for the wonderful photographs in the Dec. 12 edition of local teens enjoying sledding on the sled hill at school headquarters.

However, from your photos, there are a few reminders about the facility that should be addressed.

For safety reasons, snow boards and toboggans are not permitted at either sled hill at the school headquarters or Heritage Park. In addition, we do not allow jumps made out of hay or compacted snow.

The hay bales have been returned to the proper setting and the jump removed from the hill. The hay bales are used at the end of the sled run for safety purposes as well as to line the walk returns. We strongly urge winter sport participants to leave the hay bales in place.

The school headquarters hill is supervised Saturdays and Sundays from noon to 6 p.m., weather permitting, and during the winter holiday break. We welcome all residents to enjoy our winter facilities.

Kimberly Elkins, recreation programmer, Special Services

Remember this

As 1994 draws to a close, I would like to take this opportunity to remind the 60,000 or so citizens of Farmington Hills of a few things to keep in mind.

Farmington Hills is one of the wealthiest communities in the United States. But all residents are not wealthy. Some are poor of spirit as well as financially.

All too often citizens as well as community leaders and employees of the community, forget that we are all human beings with thoughts, cares and needs. We are all individuals unto ourselves, even though our life situations vary widely, and we all, each and every one of us, are entitled to equal rights under the flag of our great country.

Some think we are better than others who are less fortunate, do not speak as well, have more shabby clothing, cars or housing. We are no better than any of our neighbors and had we traveled through life in the footsteps of others, as fate may have it, we would all come to realize it to be so.

COMMUNITY VOICE

QUESTION:
Who would you like to take out to lunch today?



"My husband to the Tee Cozy right down the street."
Sarah Bryant
Farmington Hills



"My wife to Diamond Jim Brady's in Novi."
Tom Bryant
Farmington Hills



"Jane Keene of the Observer mailroom to the village inn."
Jane Keene
New Hudson



"My boyfriend Tom Vance someplace fancy with dancing."
Jillie Regesky
Livonia

We asked this question in the downtown branch of the Farmington Community Library.

The Farmington Observer

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— Philip Power