



Corridor people: Bob and Diane Blakeney are ready for business at their family restaurant on Grand River Avenue.

SHARON LEHNING/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

# Project lights way to fix up Grand River corridor

By BILL COULTANT  
STAFF WRITER

Something old, something new. Sprucing up the much-traveled Grand River corridor has been talked about extensively over the last few years. Now the city of Farmington Hills is beginning curb and lighting improvements that it hopes residents and business people along the avenue will pick up on to improve the look of one of the city's gateways.

"Grand River (Avenue) is the entrance to Farmington Hills," said 21-year resident Ida Rancesbottom. "Improving the corridor is something I've been trying to bring about for a long time. An improved corridor will bring out

pride among the residents."

The improvements, which are under construction, will include new curb cuts, removal of old power poles, landscaping on the boulevard, and new lighting that will improve safety, security and the area's appearance from Eight Mile to Middlebelt. The improvements should eventually extend to Orchard Lake and Nine Mile.

"The fired up," said Farmington Hills City Manager Bill Costick. "This will really make the area attractive and will be an encouragement to business owners and residents to take pride and make improvements on their properties."

The lighting, curb cuts and

some of the landscaping should be complete by November with the remaining landscaping set for completion in the spring of 1996. Costick also said that the city had originally estimated the total cost of the 1995-96 improvements at \$399,000. They will spend about \$676,000 on the project with \$200,000 coming from city coffers.

Community Development Block Grants will contribute \$347,000 to the project, the Economic Development Commission will contribute \$7,000, the Michigan Department of Transportation will contribute \$100,000, a federal grant for tree fencing and sidewalks \$22,000, the city capital im-

provement fund \$100,000, and the city's general fund \$100,000.

Safety improvements including restoring lawns, sidewalks, landscaping, screening, handicap ramps and driveway access will cost \$250,665; street lighting will cost \$160,000; Ameritech is removing its poles at no cost; median landscaping and screening will cost \$130,334; an entrance sign and landscaping will cost \$5,000; MDOT curb repair and new curb construction will cost \$100,000; and engineering costs will be \$40,000.

"The whole streetscape will be improved," Costick said. "We also plan to encourage private property owners to work on Dumpsters and other problems.

We hope that this will inspire private property owners to do more."

And so far, it has.

"There were some give-ups," said Bob Blakeney, owner of Blakeney's Ranch House. "We hate to lose our flagpole, but the city is doing considerable landscaping. They've been real helpful."

Blakeney, along with other business owners and residents, were in on plans for the improvements from the early stages.

"I did have input," he said. "We had plenty of arguments about setbacks and other things, but it came together. I think the lampposts and green belt are re-

ally going to help."

The corridor dates back to pre-paved highway days when it was a heavily traveled Indian trail connecting the Grand River in western Michigan to trading centers in the Detroit area. Through growth, fostered by settlement and the opening of the Erie Canal in 1825, travel on the road increased, resulting in Congress establishing the Grand River Turnpike in 1832.

With the establishment of the state's capital in Lansing, the road continued to grow in importance, becoming the Detroit-Howell and Lansing Plank Road.

The Farmington Hills City Council approved money for the project in April.

# DDA officials boost efforts to recruit new businesses

By LARRY O'CONNOR  
STAFF WRITER

They've tried brochures and business cards. They've shook hands and patted backs.

Farmington Downtown Development Authority officials are stepping up marketing efforts to attract new businesses — including the offer of financial incentives.

A DDA subcommittee is putting together a package to prospective retail outlets. Letters will be sent with demographic information and photos of the downtown area. If needed, they will be followed up by personal visits by DDA members.

A big part of the presentation could involve an offer by the DDA to partially subsidize business loans to newcomers.

DDA officials are asking financial institutions in the Central Business District if they'd also like to help subsidize such a loan program.

The DDA would subsidize part of the interest payment, City Manager Frank Lauhoff said. Money would come from the DDA budget.

A pool of \$200,000 could be available in loans for businesses

to relocate to downtown Farmington — until next year — if the plan materializes.

"It's not a case of being good, we know we have a great city," Lauhoff said. "The question is, 'How can you be a little bit better?'"

DDA director Judy Downey has used brochures, a video and resource directories in the past. But Lauhoff added, "It's never been this aggressive."

Loans would help with relocation costs such as new signs and moving expenses. Current downtown businesses would also be eligible for facade improvement loans, Downey said.

Four lending institutions in the DDA district — Chiropractic Credit Union, MetroBank, NBD, and First Federal — will be asked to submit proposals.

"I hope financial institutions see this as an opportunity to fulfill their Community Reinvestment Act," said DDA board member Bob Heinrich, who is also president of MetroBank.

A DDA subcommittee was formed to take on recruiting. Members include DDA board members: Michelle Jakacki of

Focal Point Studios, Joyce Cornwell of the Village Mall, Downey, Heinrich, and Lauhoff.

Respondents in a recent informal DDA survey in the Farmington Observer said they want to see more full-scale service restaurants and upscale clothing stores. They also said they want to see fewer discount stores.

The in-house approach is less expensive than going with an outside marketing firm, Lauhoff said. Some cities spend up to \$20,000 for marketing campaigns.

"Sometimes they miss the point of what the community is about," Lauhoff said.

Downtown has seen a steady influx of new businesses. A craft shop, Something Wood, opened in the Village Mall, and an antique and collectibles store, Charub's Chest opened recently.

Also, American Cellular is opening an outlet in the Downtown Center.

"We know we have a few empty stores, but everything is starting to fill up," Lauhoff said. "Even though they are filling up, we don't want to wait for that to happen again."

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# Parents have right to pesticide alert

By MARIE CHESTNEY  
STAFF WRITER

Little Jimmy forgot to eat his lunch and pushes the bag to the back of his locker. There his sandwich sits, dry after day, mildewing, fermenting, hardening into a lump of blackened yuck.

Finally, the local ant population gets wind of the feast hidden in the locker. In they march. Pretty soon Jimmy has a locker full of happy ants.

And the school principal, eyeing the invading army, calls for the Orkin man.

In days gone by, parents of children with allergies would have been sprayed in the school unless they happened to spot a notice posted in the building.

Now, because of a new rule

from the Michigan Department of Agriculture, parents can know ahead of time if pesticides or herbicides are about to be sprayed, and can take appropriate action to protect their children.

In past years, the department only required the posting of a notice in the school.

On Aug. 11, the department told all state districts, including Farmington and Clarencoville, that they must inform parents of pesticide and herbicide use in the schools if a parent or guardian requests such notification. The requirement went into effect Aug. 18.

Each year, districts must tell parents of their right to be notified within 30 days of the start of the school year.

Districts statewide are now

hurrying to get this message out to parents: You have the right to be told before any pesticides or herbicides are sprayed on school property. This includes applications both inside and outside.

"We have another mandate" said Clarencoville Superintendent David Kamleh. "We have been dealing with Termix for several years. They treat each building on a monthly basis. They will hold off on the next treatment until we satisfy the new regulation."

A form letter will be available that parents must fill out, sign and return to their child's school if they wish to be notified of pesticide use.

Parents are asked to return the form letter to their child's school, not make their request via a phone call.