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PRD zoning-- the wave of the future?

analysis

(Note: A zoning category originally intended to relieve the monotony of subdivision development has become the "hot" idea for prospective developers in Farmington Hills this summer. Planned residential developments have been petitioned for more than a square mile of undeveloped land. The reaction has been mixed, and the Farmington Enterprise & Observer talked to some people working with the problem to find out why.)

By DAN McCOSH

FARMINGTON HILLS—Peace of mind for a subdivision dweller floats on an alphabet soup of zoning categories. If you live in an "RA-1," the variety of threats is astonishing. An "RC-1," an "RA-3" or even an "LL-1" could theoretically be designated next door, and the accompanying increase in population, or change in land use, could drastically change the neighborhood climate.

A relatively new category has been added to the list in Farmington Hills, and the change and potential for change has attracted developers and alarmed some homeowners who see the change as a threat to basically single-family neighborhoods.

The new letters are "PRD," planned residential development. "I'm convinced people just don't understand it," Mayor Frederick Lichtman, fresh from a recent series of hearings on three developments proposed under the new ordinance, said.

All the proposals involved at least 100 acres, and some as much as a half a square mile of land.

The eagerness of large land holders to petition for the ordinance has led to speculation this type of development will completely replace the old idea of a subdivision, just as subdivisions replaced the old style of building a

neighborhood house by house in the city.

"I don't see it as a deterioration of single family zoning," William Jarratt, a member of the Hills planning commission said.

The concept of PRD mixes multiple dwelling units, single-family and open space.

The ordinance calls for at least a third of any given development to be single-family, and 25 per cent of the land to be open space.

THE NEW zoning category evolved from a desire to plan large tracts of land with a mixture of housing types.

"A lot of people don't realize the control of population is still there," Jarratt said.

The population density is defined in the ordinance as the number of bedrooms allowed per acre of land, a concept used in single-family and apartment zoning in the Hills.

The PRD category allows a developer to build about 10 per cent more bedrooms per acre than in the equivalent single-family zoning.

However, the number of housing units per acre is greater under PRD than under single-family zoning. PRD-1 allows up to 3.7 units per acre, approximately double the density of single-family RA-1.

This appears to be the major appeal to developers, since the increased number of housing units generally means a greater return on their investment.

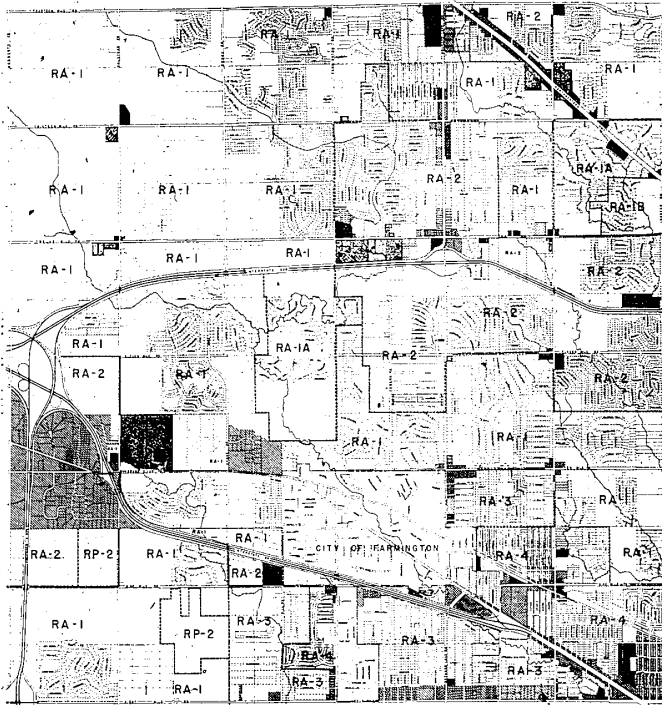
"We never really expected every Tom, Dick and Harry to ask for PRD," Jarratt said.

But every sizable development which has come before the planners and the city council this year has been PRD.

Not all have been greeted with open arms.

A PROJECT planned by John Uznis west of Drake Rd. and south

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Zoning future?

The current zoning map of Farmington Hills indicates large sections of vacant land, mainly in the northwest area, zoned for single-family residential (RA-1). Many developers are seeking a rezoning from this category to the

relatively new RP-1, with mixed results. The "RP" zoning indicated south of the expressway has been approved, the smaller section indicated a "RP" near Halspread Rd. was turned down.

School starting with changes for students

FARMINGTON—At various times Wednesday morning the first bell of the new school year will ring, signaling the end of summer vacation for children in the Farmington area.

School age children in both the elementary and secondary schools will report a day later than their teachers, who will be going to school on Tuesday to organize their classrooms and prepare for the coming year.

There will be changes and adjustments to be made for both the teachers and the children.

THE DEFEAT of the millage, forced the district to make many cuts in programs and services, according to school administrators.

Programs such as music, arts, and athletics have been reduced, and new programs which were planned for the year have been postponed.

For the students who were attending Bond Elementary school there will be new schools and some new classmates.

In order to make up some of the deficit in funds the school board decided to close Bond.

The children who were attending Bond Elementary will be going to three different schools, Woodcreek, High Meadow, and Eagle.

For many of them it will be the first time they will be riding to school in a bus.

AMONG THE children going to school on that first day will be over 900 four and five year-olds who will start kindergarten.

Seventh graders going into junior high for the first time will be starting a new school and a new phase of their education on Wednesday.

This year a new orientation program has been started for them.

They will be the only students in the junior highs in the morning.

THE OLDER junior high students

will not be attending classes until the afternoon session.

The junior high orientation program was developed by the junior high principals because many parents were concerned about the adjustments their children would have to make moving from elementary into junior high.

The senior high school students will be using Wednesday as a registration day.

All of the high schools in Farmington are currently using the college method of registration, rather than the traditional high school method.

Roof fire

Four stations turned out to fight this blaze at Boatland on Grand River Wednesday night, one of the biggest fires this year in Farmington Hills. (Photo by Ralph Evert)



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