

Building boom continues

By DARLENE STINSON

New buildings are sprouting like weeds in all areas of western Wayne and south Oakland counties that still have open space.

Colonials, ranches and quad-levels continue to usurp land once used for agricultural production in semi-rural Canton and Plymouth townships on the western fringes of Wayne County.

Last year, construction in the City of Livonia hit an all-time high. In Farmington Hills, planning commission agendas are filled with requests for subdivision site plan approvals.

Even in fully-developed areas like Redford Township and the City of Plymouth, building inspectors are kept busy with requests from homeowners and businessmen to expand their facilities.

BUT THE NEW HOMES, garages and residential additions that are springing up all over western Wayne and south Oakland counties are not being hailed by all residents and municipal officials as evidence of "progress."

In Farmington Hills, some residents are objecting to developers' plans for more subdivisions out of fear that their community will lose its "rural" atmosphere.

Some city officials predict that the community's current population of some 50,000 persons will double in the next five years. Open space that still exists in Farmington Hills will succumb to development by 1983, they say.

Canton Township's 10-year-old residential building boom has become a multi-faceted political issue.

The township's population has tripled since 1970 because of heavy residential construction. The last report prepared by the Southeastern Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) on residential construction ranked Canton second in 1976 among all municipalities in a seven-county region in terms of new house starts.

The rapid residential growth has placed a burden on the Plymouth-Canton Community Schools to provide classroom space for the increased student population. School taxes have been increased to build additional school buildings, and a year-round school program has been implemented to accommodate the students moving to Canton and Plymouth townships each year.

Some residents have demanded that the Canton Township board take action to slow the residential growth, while others are campaigning to save the agricultural land in the western portion of the township from urban sprawl.

Canton officials have expressed fear that their township will become a "bedroom community" with a poor industrial tax base. They have taken steps to attract more industry to the area.

ON THE FLIP-SIDE are feelings that new construction offers a definite plus to the community where it occurs.

Construction of industrial and commercial buildings, in particular, increases the tax base of a municipality and may help alleviate the property-tax burden of homeowners.

Renovation of existing buildings improves the appearance of a community, while fees from building permits help beef up the general fund or building department budget.

Each community in western Wayne and south Oakland counties records its building activity in a different manner, so an accurate comparison of construction in each municipality is difficult to draw.

A survey of nine communities in the western metropolitan area, however, showed Canton, Farmington Hills, Plymouth Township and Livonia were hotbeds of building activity last year.

Building activity in the area was up overall last year.

"Canton Township leads all municipalities in the western metropolitan area in terms of new-home construction. In 1976, when 1,681 new homes were built in Canton Township, Sterling Heights was the only municipality in a seven-county region around Detroit that issued more single-family home permits."

The number of building permits Canton issued for single-family houses increased to 1,466 in 1977.

New construction in the township was valued at \$55 million last year. "In Farmington Hills, new construction was valued at \$38 million in 1977; \$25.5 million in 1976; and \$23.6 million in 1975."

The city issued 597 permits for the construction of single-family houses in 1977; 38 permits for apartment buildings; 11 permits for commercial buildings; and 12 permits for industrial development.

"Building activity in Livonia dramatically increased in 1977."

While new construction in the city was valued at \$31 million in 1976 and \$32 million in 1975, the value of new construction jumped to \$89.7 million in 1977.

Almost 650 permits were issued for the construction of single-family houses in 1977, while 65 were issued for industrial and commercial buildings.

A spokesperson for the Livonia Inspection Department predicted 1978 would be another boom year because of the "improved economic climate."

Livonia's last building boom took place about a decade ago.

"In semi-rural Plymouth Township, 630 permits were issued in 1977 for new buildings valued at \$22.6 million. The township building department issued 402 permits for single-family houses, three permits for industrial buildings and seven permits for commercial buildings."

In 1976, new construction in Plymouth Township was valued at \$17.6 million.

"Building activity in Westland has dropped off since the city's building-boom years of 1963-1971, even though there still is open space in the city."

In 1977, the city issued only 74 permits for the construction of single-family homes. That compares to 817 single-family permits issued in 1970 and 497 single-family permits in 1971.

"New construction in the nearly fully-developed Redford Township was valued at \$3.8 million in the township's 1976-77 fiscal year. Although only 17 single-family houses and 16 commercial or industrial buildings were constructed, hundreds of permits were issued for additions to existing buildings."

The township building department collected almost \$37,000 in permit fees in 1976-77; almost \$43,000 in 1975-76; \$22,000 in 1974-75; and \$33,000 in 1973-74.

"The Garden City Building Department issued 46 permits in 1977 for the construction of single-family houses on the scattered residential lots that still remain in the almost fully-developed city."

New construction in 1977 was valued at more than \$9 million and included stores, multiple-family homes and office buildings.

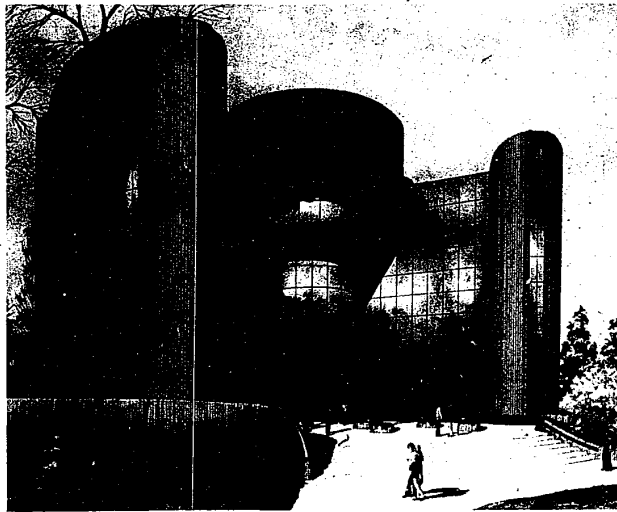
"Building inspectors in the City of Plymouth considered 1977 a busy year, even though new construction was valued at only \$2.1 million."

A total of 677 building permits were issued in 1977. Additions to existing homes and commercial buildings accounted for most of the construction activity. Only six vacant residential lots remain in the city.

New construction in Plymouth was valued at \$1.5 million in both 1976 and 1975; \$1.2 million in 1974; \$2.6 million in 1973; \$2.1 million in 1972; and \$4.3 million in 1971.

"The Farmington Building Department has collected almost \$5,000 in fees from the 181 building permits it has issued so far in fiscal year 1977-78, which ends in July."

In 1976-77, 171 permits were issued. Only 151 permits were issued in 1975-76.



Livonia's new city hall is well under way in the civic center and will look like this when finished. The drawing was furnished by the Livonia firm of Ralls Hamill Architects, Inc.

Uncle Sam is chipping in too

By CRAIG PIECHURA

What has the federal government done for you lately?

If you live in Livonia, Redford Township, Canton Township, Westland, Farmington or Farmington Hills, there are new municipal buildings under construction thanks to Uncle Sam's financial assistance.

Redford and Canton are building new township halls and Livonia is building a five-story city hall complete with council chambers that will no longer make it necessary to conduct official business in a hallway.

But federal funds are not just building new city halls in the area.

Garden City is renovating its olympic-size ice rink and Westland is building a giant recreation complex with federal money.

LIVONIA should have its \$6 million city hall completed by this summer, according to officials. Construction expenses have exceeded the \$4.6 million public works grant and the remainder will come out of the city's general fund.

CANTON TOWNSHIP received a

\$2.7 million public works grant last year to fund a new three-story administration building at Canton Center and Proctor roads.

Canton, too, will dip into its general fund to finish the third floor of the administration building. The third floor is slated to be the site of Canton's first library.

REDFORD TOWNSHIP technically isn't getting a new township hall but it'll look like one. A nearly \$14 million addition to the township hall, on Beech Daly, south of Five Mile, is being built with a public works grant. The new addition will combine Redford's district court and township offices under one roof.

THE CITY OF PLYMOUTH and Plymouth Township put in applications for city hall expansions that were denied.

Farmington Hills was turned down for federal public works monies so it turned around and used \$800,000 in federal revenue sharing funds to finance 95 per cent of a city hall renovation project.

THE CITY OF FARMINGTON

received a \$1.2 million public works grant to build an addition to the DPW building. The recent revamping included a police firing range; a tower to store road salt and a fireman's training tower.

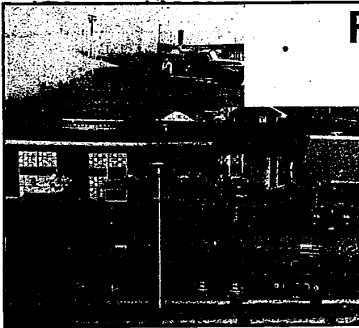
A municipal ice arena in Garden City is undergoing considerable renovation this year thanks to federal revenue sharing funds. When finished the rink at Cherry Hill, east of Merriman, will be larger than Olympia's.

And \$200,000 of the estimated \$265,000 cost of the rink renovation is expected to be paid through revenue sharing appropriations.

SPORTS ACTIVITIES will be beefed up in Westland with last year's \$2.2 million public works grant for a recreational complex to be built behind the existing city hall at Ford Road, west of Wayne Road.

The building will include racquetball courts, an outdoor pool, a gymnasium and a community building. The community building will house parks and recreation department employees and serve as senior citizen headquarters, according to Dave Rockelmann, building director.

Progress Means Better Service Redford Township Has It



Three Fire Stations protect the community today, with 51 men and 12 vehicles. Shown with some of the firefighters and equipment is Chief Vern Fischer (center). About 20 years ago the equipment was limited to vehicles like the truck shown above.



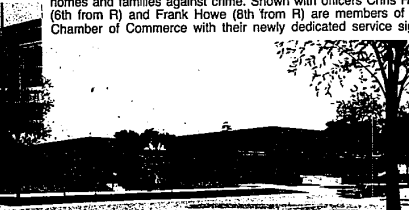
The Neighborhood Watch Program is one of the newest and most successful public services. Led by Police Sgt. George Murphy, officers of the Crime Prevention Bureau have organized and trained over one quarter of township area residents to protect their homes and families against crime. Shown with officers Chris Horn (6th from R) and Frank Howe (8th from R) are members of the Chamber of Commerce with their newly dedicated service sign.



Teams of well trained paramedics are on call 24 hours a day utilizing the latest in emergency life-saving equipment. Over 1200 emergency runs were made for residents last year under the direction of Capt. Roy Hall. Back in the 40's and 50's a part-time and/or volunteer force manned the vehicle shown above.



Beech-Daly was two-lane black-top and the D.P.W. had these men and trucks to service the community. Today the Sanitation Dept. has 39 men and 14 pieces of equipment; D.P.W. has 27 men and 11 pieces of equipment; Building Dept. 6 men and three cars. All of these operations are under the direction of Leo Snage, Director of Public Services shown with some of his men and vehicles.



The new \$1.4 million District Court and remodeled Town Hall, with new second story Supervisor's Suite, will look like this when completed since the building as it has existed since its dedication in 1941, and a small addition in 1953.

PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES

HOWARD KRAFT PARK

1 Little League Diamond
2 Tennis Courts
Basketball Court
Playground Equipment

CLAUDE ALLISON PARK

1 Lighted Combination Softball-Pony-Baseball diamond
1 Lighted Softball Diamond
3 Little League Diamonds
1 Football Field
Playground Equipment
1 Concession Building
Parking Lot & Restrooms

ELLIOTT PARK

Playground Equipment

BEECH WATER TOT LOT

Playground Equipment

VANDENBERG

Playground Equipment

KORVETTE PARK

1 Little League Diamond
Playground Equipment

CAPITOL PARK

1 Pony-Cott Diamond
Restrooms/Concession Press Box
Parks Maintenance Building
Parking Lot for 160 Cars
4 Tennis Courts
Picnic Area

PHOENIX PARK

1 Little League Diamond
2 Tennis Courts
1 Basketball Court
Playground Equipment

REDFORD ARENA

Ice Arena
Parking Facility
Concession Meeting Room
Pro Shop

BEECH FIELD

1 Lighted Softball Diamond
1 Basketball Court
Playground Equipment

REDFORD TOWNSHIP SENIOR CITIZEN AND COMMUNITY CENTER

Cards and Crafts
Gym
Passive Recreation:
Reading
Pool
Ping Pong

RICHARD MANNING PARK

1 Little League Diamond
1 Basketball Court
Playground Equipment

GRAHAM FIELD

2 Baseball Diamonds



Supervisor Patrick McDonald
Clerk Ruth Sullivan
Treasurer Edward Kennedy

TRUSTEES

Roger Handy Robert Brang
Earl Pachett Don Christie