

Last-ditch effort mounts in court to defeat Park LaSalle

By JACKIE KLEIN

Four citizen groups — two from Franklin Village — were in court Tuesday to make another attempt in a seven-year battle to stop the \$125-million Park LaSalle development in Southfield.

The lawsuit, filed in Judge Gene Schmeiz's Oakland County Circuit Court, claims the proposed high-rise project "at Franklin's front door" would turn 50 acres of land rich in natural resources into an area like Northland Shopping Center.

Initiating the legal action against S.B. McLaughlin Associates Inc. of Canada, developer of Park LaSalle, were Concerned Citizens of Franklin, Franklin Village Townhouse Condominium Association, Council of Homeowners Associations in Farmington Hills and East Michigan Environmental Action Council.

Officers of the concerned citizen's group said the court suit is a last ditch effort to halt the massive development because the organization is running out of options.

The classic land use battle centers around a 50-acre high-rise development approved by Southfield City Council for construction in the city's 12 Mile-Telegraph-Northwestern Highway "Silver Triangle," about one-half mile south of Franklin.

McLaughlin has been allowed by the court to proceed with construction of a nine-story office building and a 12-story condominium complex on the site. As planned, the project would take 10-12 years to complete. The first phase is set for completion in two years.

Billy Turner, vice president of McLaughlin in the Southfield area, said in an earlier interview that he was glad construction could continue. It will take about a year to complete the two buildings, he said.

Turner, who claimed the lengthy legal hold-ups have caused economic problems for the developer, said McLaughlin has no immediate plans to move ahead with the project.

Turner could not be reached for comment following the latest court challenge.

Developers for seven years have been battling with several civic and environmental groups over the issue of what constitutes an acceptable limit of urban growth.

IN A FEB. 8 letter to residents of Franklin, Frank Carro and Bernard Isenberg, officers of the concerned citizen's group, wrote, "For seven years we have described a proposed city 2,500 feet from our border with 6,000 residents and visitors and 13,000 cars daily. This virtual city would dwarf our village."

"It would change unalterably the character and ecology of our environment, traffic patterns, population density, the crime rate, taxes and our way of life. We have had to contend with difficult odds trying to stop this project."

McLaughlin plans to develop one, 25-story apartment building, four 20-story apartment structures, a 12-story condominium, a nine-story office building, a four-story hotel/health club complex and a one-story recreation-oriented building. Proposed is parking for nearly 4,000 cars. The buildings would house 3,000 residents and about 500 employees.

The letter from Concerned Citizens of Franklin said members have been told they don't have a chance to stop the development. But, the letter added, "there is no city built on the 50-acre site between Case and Lockdale on 12 Mile."

"For seven years, we've been on the brink of disaster, asking residents for money under discouraging circumstances and deadlines," the letter said. "Though we often lost our immediate battle, somehow our action prevented us from losing the war."

"You've put up with a lot of last stands during this time. And despite the repetitiveness, the apparent hopelessness, the seeming 'boy who cried wolf'ishness" of the situation, you came

through. We're nearing the final playing out of our options and chances for success."

LAST OCTOBER, the four citizen groups filed a complaint in Oakland County Circuit Court for a preliminary injunction against building Park LaSalle. Judge Schmeiz ruled the developer could erect the 12-story condominium and the nine-story office building.

The lawsuit alleges that Park

LaSalle would cause undue and irreparable damage to the environment which is prohibited by the Michigan Environmental Protection Act. The trial is expected to last two weeks to a month, according to William Garratt, attorney for the citizens' groups.

Concerned Citizens of Franklin are asking village residents to pledge \$50 to \$100 or more a year for three years to help defray legal fees if needed. Residents are urged by the group to think

of the pledges as "an insurance policy against the urbanization of Franklin."

In the spring of 1979, Oakland County Circuit Judge William Beer dismissed a lawsuit brought by Franklin against Southfield and its zoning board of appeals for "paving the way" for Park LaSalle.

"I am laying to rest the annoying intervention of the village of Franklin into the city of Southfield's affairs," Beer said at that time.

Judith Jamison highlights Alvin Ailey performances

The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre's return to Music Hall Center Feb. 19-21 will be highlighted by the appearance of dancer Judith Jamison.

Ms. Jamison, who has not been with the company in Detroit for the past two seasons, is scheduled to dance in every one of the seven performances.

An annual sell-out at Detroit's Music Hall, this year's Alvin Ailey engagement offers 13 different dance pieces

combined to make seven varied programs.

In keeping with his "expression of the human spirit" in dance, Ailey brings his new work, "Memoria," dedicated to modern dance choreographer Joyce Trisler, who died only a few months ago.

Other new pieces are mixed with some of Ailey's most popular dances, like "Revelations" and "Suite Odis," interwoven in a program of modern, jazz

and classical dance reflecting the American heritage, both black and white.

A FAVORITE OF DETROIT audiences, Ms. Jamison is tall and strikingly graceful. Her unusual style has "turned on" dance critics around the world. She has appeared as guest performer with American Ballet Theatre, Harkness Ballet, San Francisco Ballet, and the Dallas Ballet.

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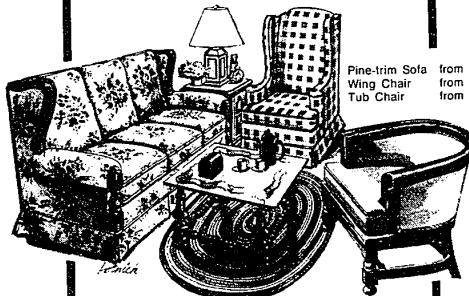
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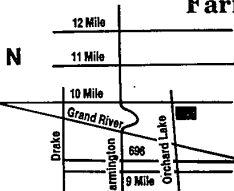
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