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Neighbors fight uphill battle against blight

By MARY GNIEWEK

Homeowners in Farmington Hills' southern section 36 are fighting a bat-

tle against blight and indifference. A half-dozen housewives gathered in the kitchen of Nancy Glenfield's home on Ontaga on Monday to talk about

problems that plague their neighborhood, bounded by 8 Mile and 9 Mile between Inkster and Middlebelt. The women, all veterans of countless

city meetings, fight as a unit on big issues and separately on smaller complaints.

They cite vacant homes vandalized and set afire, a resident peeping Tom and back yards full of old appliances, junk cars and mountains of trash as just a few of their continual headaches.

"It's bad when residents have to fight city hall all the time," said Leona Layland, treasurer of the Section 36 Homeowners Association. "No one has time to follow through on our complaints."

The women gathered at the Glenfield

at 7:20 a.m. when he heard glass shatter inside the house.

A man tried to lure him inside and when he declined, he was pursued for several blocks. He managed to escape unharmed.

City workers unable to get the owner to secure the empty house ordered it boarded up on Monday afternoon. The house is directly across the street from another boarded-up home, owned by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

"These empty homes are a thorn in

clusive domain, but her job responsibilities have since expanded and neighbors claim enforcement is slackening off again.

"It's kind of hard to have a zoning inspector in one section all day when you've got 36 sections to look after," Mayor Joann Soronen said.

"But she has spent a lot of time down there and we're quite pleased."

ZONING SUPERVISOR HAL ROWE agrees.

"Our enforcement hasn't eased," he said. "They're still concentrating down there. Fifty-one tickets have been issued in section 36 in the past year."

Unlike the residents, Rowe claims things are getting better.

"Things have improved immeasurably in the past two or three years," he said. "There's some newer homes and more pride in ownership."

"But it's a never-ending process."

Some of those 51 anti-blight tickets are still unsettled. Violators are given 10 days written notice by the city to clean their property or they receive a court summons.

In district court, the judge decides if the violator should be fined (up to \$500 a day) or jailed (up to 30 days).

"You can get it cleaned up, then a week later, it starts all over again," Mayor Soronen said.

The neighbors agreed.

"They get rid of their junk cars for a month and then they tow another one into their yard," Mrs. Glenfield said. "Sometimes I think they do it just for spite."

'It's bad when residents have to fight city hall all the time. No one has time to follow through on our complaints.'

— homeowners spokeswoman Leona Layland

residence take pride in their homes. Mrs. Glenfield's modest white house with black window shutters is tidy inside and out.

But for every nice house in the neighborhood, there's another one neglected or abandoned.

IT WAS FROM one of the abandoned homes at the corner of Ontaga and Emmett that the Glenfield's 12-year-old son was approached by two men last Thursday morning.

The boy, a student at Clarenceville Junior High, was walking to a bus stop

our side," Mrs. Glenfield said. "They're continually being vandalized."

The neighbors say they feel they can't communicate with the owners of the abandoned homes or with the residents guilty of blight. ("They seem to enjoy living that way — with the filth," the neighbors say.)

And though the city doubled its zoning inspection staff from two to four officers in June 1979, residents say there isn't enough enforcement of the laws.

Things improved temporarily when section 36 became one inspector's ex-



Boarding up an abandoned home on Ontaga at Emmett are Dennis Maier (with ladder) and Bob Lewis. Neighbors say these vacant homes are hav-

vens for vandals and arsonists. (Staff photo by Randy Borst)

Economy still bleak

By SUZIE ROLLINS SINGER

Forget about buying a home on a single-interest 25-year conventional mortgage. Don't even think about collecting higher interest rates on certificates of deposit. And if the economy doesn't swing upwards, bank-financed home and car loans may vanish in 1981.

These forecasts come from officials at Liberty State Bank and Trust and Michigan National Bank. The bankers say they are trying their utmost to attract consumers to borrow money.

They admit their faltering business has placed them in precarious positions, which has spurred Michigan National Bank to set its own prime lending rate, under the pretext that making a little profit is better than no profit at all.

"The prime rate is set as a function

of the supply-and-demand concept in major lending areas. The more people who want to borrow, the higher the prime goes," said Andrew Brodun, vice president and controller at Michigan National Bank, North Metro. "What we've done is to forget about the New York prime rate and establish our own at 18 percent. When we did that last week prime had hit 21 percent."

"Our prime is not connected to any other prime. Ours could move at any time," he added. "The reason we re-adjusted our prime is so we can help some people. We're hoping we'll get some customers rather than none. We're not saying what we're doing is good for the long run, but it might stimulate some buying now."

Gerald Salkowski, president of Liberty State Bank and Trust, which has

offices in the tri-county area, said that the traditional home mortgage has fallen by the wayside and been replaced with loans that are renegotiated every few years.

"THERE'S NO WAY there will ever be the 25-year mortgage (held constant with one interest rate). The current cost of money is causing lending institutions to charge more for mortgages," Salkowski said.

About a year ago, most banks began writing 25-year mortgages with interest rates that must be renegotiated every five years, Salkowski said.

"That's always been done in Europe and Canada but it's a relatively new custom in this country," he added.

Michigan law mandates that 16 1/2 percent is the highest interest a bank can charge for a new car loan.

"We're losing money at 16 1/2 percent but we're doing it anyway," Salkowski said. "We have an obligation to our customers, but if the prime rate doesn't drop next year we'll be out of the car and home loan business."

THE CAR AND HOME BUILDING industries are the hardest hit by the soaring interest rates, the bankers say, and while money may become available at a lower price for short-term

loans in 1981, home-mortgage money will remain scarce.

"We all have differences of opinion about how high the interest rates will go before they fall, but we do know now that residential mortgage money is virtually unavailable," Michigan National's Brodun said. "When people see interest rates at 15-16 percent they probably can't afford the house payments. I don't think we'll have interest rates below 11-12 percent in 1981."

Certificates of deposit and money market certificates, accounts earmarked for large sums of money for a specific time period, bore interest rates of up to 20 percent earlier this year, and are contributing to banks' woes, Salkowski said.

"When CDs were introduced a large number of passbook-account customers moved their accounts into CDs. We are locked into paying high interest rates and it's killing the banks," he added.

Steps planned to regulate coin dealerships in state

State lawmakers, jewelry-store owners and police are taking steps toward the regulation of coin dealerships and assay offices.

The move toward regulation stems from fears that the businesses offer an easy way for thieves to dispose of stolen coins, jewelry and precious metals.

State Representatives Sandy Brotherton (R-Farmington) and Ruth McNamee (R-Birmingham) have both asked that bills be drafted to regulate shops which buy precious metals and coins.

The issue is expected to be discussed in the State House of Representatives in January.

Brotherton advocates requiring that persons selling materials to coin and assay shops prove they are at least 18 years old.

Once the sale is completed, the shops would be required to keep the item in an unaltered state for 48 hours.

"This is so the authorities have time to check the property," Brotherton said.

Regulation would force dealers to keep detailed records so police would be able to check the description of stolen property against items purchased by the shops.

The shops, many of which presently pay for their purchases in cash, would be required to pay by check instead, Brotherton said.

Payment by check would require that the shops keep records of the names and addresses of persons who sell them items.

This type of record keeping should make it more difficult for persons to sell stolen items, Brotherton said.

It would also protect an honest dealer who buys an item, then reports it as possibly being stolen.

"Right now, if it's stolen he loses it — he's out of money. It isn't exactly incentive to report things that might be stolen," Brotherton said.

The move to regulate coin and assay shops has drawn the support of jewelry-store owners and police.

"It's a terrific idea," said Sergeant Al Haver of the Farmington Hills Police Department.

"They're doing exactly what was being done by the pawn shops until they were licensed," he said.

"They (coin and assay shops) should be covered by the same regulations as pawn shops are," he said.

Taking away the availability of an outlet for precious metals and coins would deter the casual thief, Brotherton said.

"IT'S TOO easy for people who are not professional (thieves) to do this kind of stuff," he said.

"I'm not trying to put pressure on what they pay," said Al Duquet, owner of Duquet Jewelers in Farmington and a supporter of regulating the coin and assay shops.

"People have the right to get the best price they can for themselves," he said.

But he is concerned about the availability of the shops to persons dealing in stolen goods. His concern covers his own business, too.

Duquet is worried that if gold and silver become too easy to sell, jewelry thefts will increase. In turn, he fears

persons will become reluctant to buy and wear jewelry and open themselves up to a potential loss.

"How much longer can we sell jewelry in confidence?" he asked.

Although Duquet himself will buy some gold and silver items in his store, he says the transactions are done only with regular customers.

"I'm interested in buying gold and silver but in a few cases, someone will come in off the street with six or seven engagement rings. You know the stuff was stolen," he said.

"I called the cops in each case and in about 90 percent of the cases they were trying to sell stolen property."

Over-50 set can ski free

The United States Ski Association and the Farmington Hills Parks and Recreation Department will co-sponsor a Cross-Country Ski Workshop tailored to the fitness needs of Americans 50 years of age and older on Dec. 29 at 1 p.m.

This free workshop will stress the health, fitness and social aspects of cross-country skiing while arming participants with basic information on the sport. On-snow clinics will follow with coaches giving senior skiers an introductory ski lesson, recommendations on proper clothing, equipment and conditioning, as well as demonstrations of techniques.

A free guide to cross-country skiing for seniors will be published and distributed by USSA and The Travelers Insurance Co. The booklet will be geared to novice and beginning skiers and will cover all aspects of the sport while serving as a home guide, encouraging older Americans to participate in this invigorating winter activity on their own.

The workshop will take place with or without snow at Glen Oaks Golf Course, W. 13 Mile Road.

For further information, please contact the Farmington Hills Parks and Recreation Department, 31555 Eleven Mile Road, or call 474-6115.



Hockey practice

Jeff Schroen and Rick Friess, both 15-year-old Farmington Hills residents, found this pond between 10 Mile and 11 Mile on Farmington Road a good place to practice their favorite winter sport.

(Staff photo by Randy Borst)

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EARLY NEW YEAR'S CLASSIFIED DEADLINES

Because of the New Year Holiday next Thursday, our classified deadline will be moved up to Monday, December 29 at 5 p.m.

REMEMBER, one call does it all!

644-1070