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Robinson predicts northern city resurgence

By MARY GNIEWEK

Real estate growth and development will drop off by 10 percent in 1981, market analyst Bruce Robinson told the Builders Association of Southeastern Michigan Wednesday.

Robinson, who claims a 95 percent accuracy rating in economic forecasts for the seven-county region that makes up Greater Detroit, addressed 100 members of BASM at the Botsford Inn of Farmington Hills.

For the '80s, Robinson predicts a paralysis in HUD and other government-sponsored housing programs, continued unemployment and a further decline in housing.

"But there will be some government-market cooperation," he said.

"Government will work with big business. The Ralph Naders will, hopefully, no longer interfere in our growth."

Robinson, a former automotive statistician, identified the energy crisis, the

resurgence of downtown Detroit, and the condominium comeback as the three biggest housing stories in the past decade.

Last April, he forecast 10,000 building permits would be issued. He was off by just 2 percent when Southeast Michigan Council of Government statistics were tabulated.

Addressing five reports Wednesday, Robinson rebutted three of them. A prime target was a report written by economists about the decline of northern industrial states.

"IT'S A TOTALLY naive report," Robinson said.

He cited the financial power and stability of New York, Detroit, Chicago and San Francisco, all listed as declining northern cities.

"We have a skilled labor force here," he said. "We have successful recovery programs. We have raw materials. This is the Great Lakes State."

"Industry is coming back to Michigan. The Southern states are dry. We have raw materials, import and export, automotive, tourism, population density and energy efficiency."

"They don't have it down south. Unions will take over in the South as they have here. There will be wage equalization."

He summarized what's good in the local market place in another report, citing General Motors, the freeway system, world's highest home ownership, and growth (\$360 million under construction in downtown Detroit and the bustling suburban corridors through Troy and Farmington Hills.)

"Of the top 15 cities in the U.S., we have five here in Michigan in terms of income," he said. "Michigan ranks third in the U.S."

He talked of an anticipated salt-and-pepper economy in terms of defense and auto plant conversion for military production.

EMPHASIZE LIVING conditions to sell Michigan to families coming into the area, Robinson told salespersons. "You're still not doing that," he chided the group.

"Tell them how many people here go on to complete four years of college, tell them about the local school district, about Meadow Brook and the Detroit Institute of Arts. Know your market."

Robinson found several weaknesses in an automotive decline report prepared last month by Washington economist for then-President Jimmy Carter.

"Washington doesn't understand corporate production," Robinson said.

"The report neglected the need of auto plants for defense. It failed to mention that 25 percent of all retail sales in the U.S. are auto sales."

"Mechanical technologists are moving in here, and manual laborers are moving out. Demographics are changing. You can't stop the parade."

Identifying growth along freeway corridors, he called the Detroit to Flint I-75 connection "The golden corridor." The Lansing I-96 corridor, which runs through Farmington Hills and Southfield, is second.

"The transfer will be your best shot this year," Robinson told salespeople.

His tips to real estate brokers for '81: Reduce staff; improve presentation; don't panic; feed the market — don't bleed it.



BRUCE ROBINSON

Chamber audit cleanses books for festival

By MARY GNIEWEK

The Farmington Founders Festival Committee Inc. will have a clean slate when a \$7,018 debt is paid, according to an auditor's report.

The audit prepared by Williams, Meiselbach & Thalacker of Farmington Hills was ordered by the Farmington Chamber of Commerce executive board, which oversees the festival committee's finances.

The board asked for the audit last October because of poor financial records. Three months later, festival treasurer Fred Huber Jr. announced that he took more than \$7,000 from the committee's 1980 budget.

No charges were filed against Huber, who will present the board with a promissory note this week. Repayment is expected within two months.

Charles Williams, accountant for the auditing firm, presented the audit to members of the chamber board last week.

It revealed that the festival grossed \$16,655.67 last year. After costs for the parade, fireworks, insurance and other expenses, the net income was \$6,584.46. The profits wiped out all but \$201.89 of the debt from two previous festivals, which was \$5,765.38.

BECAUSE RECORDKEEPING was sketchy, an exact breakdown of cash receipts for \$3,600 of the gross profits couldn't be determined. Some deposit slips didn't reflect where or who the deposited money came from.

Williams has suggested a complete review of the festival's accounting procedures.

"In selecting a new treasurer, consideration should be given to bonding the person to insure a future loss fund," he said.

"In addition, certain controls should be set up to discourage anyone from doing what the former treasurer did."

Williams recommended that checks carry two signatures, that all festival funds be placed in one bank account (presently there are three), and that all funds be received by someone other than the treasurer first so that upon audit an independent report of what is in the account could be obtained.

"We recommend also that an annual audit be made, that the treasurer be required to retain all supporting documentation, canceled checks and bank statements," Williams said.

The Founders Festival, an institution in Farmington, is a week of celebrated pageantry each July. A dozen years old, the festival's financial support has been slipping for the past few years and threats of canceling portions of the program, such as the fireworks display, have loomed.

"With the \$6,000 deficit last year, the committee was instructed to go easy on expenses and try to make up the deficit, and they did a good job," Williams said.

"Maybe because the committee did such a good job and controls were loose, Mr. Huber did what he did."

"These non-profit organizations often have loose controls. It could tempt people who may not be tempted otherwise."

2 seats open for trustees

Nominating petitions for the Farmington Board of Education are now available to candidates.

Candidates must acquire names of 20 registered voters and must file the petitions by 4 p.m. April 8 at the Board of Education office, 32500 Shiawassee.

To be eligible, a candidate must be a registered voter of the Farmington school district. Property ownership isn't a requirement for candidacy.

Voters this June will elect two trustees to four-year terms.

Terms are expiring for trustees Emma Makinen, an eight-year veteran, and Dick Wallace, completing his first four-year term.

Neither has decided whether to run for re-election.

"I don't have to make the decision until April," said Mrs. Makinen. "It's a very heavy commitment. I take the responsibility very seriously."

Wallace, who served on various school committees before joining the board, said he hasn't made up his mind either.

Petitions are available at the board offices from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Administrator Scott Bacon is available during those hours to assist candidates with information about filing and campaign finance laws.



Fred Sanders came to town last week to reassure Sander employees that business would continue as usual. (Staff photo by Randy Borst)

Sanders vows to keep open doors

Phantoms of the hot fudge fix, do not fret or fear.

Sanders, the confectioner of fun and fattening foods, will continue normal operations in its bakery and 50 metro area retail stores despite reorganization under Chapter 11 of the U.S. bankruptcy code in Bankruptcy Court in Detroit.

"The store goes on as if nothing ever happened," according to the manager of the Sanders' store in the Kendallwood shopping center at 12 Mile and Farmington roads.

The downtown center Farmington Sanders also will continue scooping sensuous sundae.

Beginning as a salesman at Fred Sanders, company owner.

The court order permits Sanders to operate as a debtor in possession and to continue the operation of his business. The company has a total of 734 creditors with unsecured debt of \$4 million.

"The company's results of operations for the year ended May 31,

1980, were at a break-even level which was a substantial improvement over the previous year," said Stephen A. Horn, president and chief executive officer.

The company expected to return to profitability for the current fiscal year, but the expectations fell short. Michigan's recession was blamed.

"THROUGH IMPROVED sales and marketing programs, and despite a modest recovery of the De-

troit economy, we expect to generate the revenue necessary for profitable operations," Horn said.

Established in 1875, Sanders is a steadfast tradition in the Detroit area, credited with the invention of the ice cream soda and most famous for its hot fudge sundaes.

Sanders manufactures a broad line of retail treats at its Highland Park plant including Vernors ginger ale flavored ice cream and double cream chocolate layer cakes.

Dean Spencer

Business leader dies in plane crash

In 1978 Dean Spencer narrowly escaped death after being involved in a Louisville, Ky., hotel fire.

For 13 weeks he was confined to a hospital bed struggling to stay alive.

He chronicled his life and death struggle in his book "God Never Said We'd Be Leading At the Half — But He Did Promise We'd Win the Battleground."

The book went on to be a bestseller in religious bookstores around the nation.

But last Thursday death caught up with the 37-year-old business executive when the airplane which he was piloting crashed at Oakland-Pontiac Airport in Waterford Township.

A Beverly Hills resident, Spencer was an active member of the First Church of the Nazarene in Farmington Hills where he was chairman of the building program and a member of the church board.

Chief executive officer of the Trinity Corporation, Southfield, at the time of

his death, Spencer spent 16 years with the Alexander Life Insurance of Farmington Hills.

Beginning as a salesman he rose to become the senior vice president of marketing before leaving last December.

Vernon Lunn, Hamilton's vice president for corporate services, credits Spencer with much of the financial success that corporation has experienced in recent years.

"HE WAS a very brilliant individual. He was one of the greatest marketing men. We owe much of our success to Dean," said Lunn, who was a close personal friend of Spencer.

They attended the same church and for two years worked together in the field.

Hamilton paid tribute to Spencer last Friday by flying his flag at half staff. Lunn expressed shock at Spencer's

death, saying he had been a pilot since 18 years old.

"He was the pilot of pilots," said Lunn. "He was careful and knowledgeable."

Spencer was attempting a landing in a blinding fog when his aircraft hit several approach lights and burst into flames.

Also killed in the crash were Joseph and Daniel Ninowski, both of Bloomfield Hills. Spencer worked with the Ninowskis, whose company was involved in broadcasting, oil and security.

The three were returning from Tulsa, Okla. At one time the Ninowskis had owned Detroit's WDFG religious radio station. It was sold last year and became WLZ.

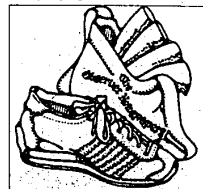
In recent months, the brothers have been attempting to acquire a broadcasting license to operate Channel 38, where they planned to broadcast religious programming.



DEAN SPENCER

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