

State loans money for home it wants to destroy

By CRAIG PIECHURA

One state agency is financing a new home in Southfield built on land another state agency may buy to make way for the I-696 freeway.

How? It's easy, says Allan Dewey, manager of the single-family home financing program of the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA).

Three Lansing-based MSHDA site inspectors inspect about 30 homes in the state per day, but checking for future freeways isn't part of the review process, Dewey says.

Last January the Southfield Building Department issued a temporary occupancy permit for a new home built on the proposed path of I-696.

Last Thursday the Michigan Department of Transportation got the nod from SEMCOG to request more than \$15 million in state and federal funds to buy privately owned land along the proposed route of I-696.

The next day, MSHDA, a public corporation administered by state officials, closed the deal on a low-cost mortgage to a family whose new house sits on land the state wants to buy as it

clears the way for completion of I-696. The loan was approved in January 1980.

Lot 63, at 16135 Meadowood, Southfield, lies directly in the freeway path, according to William Mitchell, local MDOT right-of-way engineer. The home is directly behind Thompson Middle School, north of 10 1/2 Mile, west of Greenfield.

As recently as last Friday MSHDA approved a mortgage at 8 1/2 percent interest for a home at that address.

NEW HOMEOWNERS Michael and Yvonne Arnold, who live with their three sons at the Meadowood address, inadvertently found out about the proposed freeway path last month. They received a disturbing letter from an attorney when all but the trim was finished on their energy-efficient "dream home."

An attorney representing parties opposed to the freeway wrote the Arnolds asking if they'd join a class-action lawsuit effort to stop I-696 from uprooting existing homeowners such as themselves.

Persons living in houses along the proposed path of Interstate 696 have

never been sure if their homes must go to make way for the expressway. Talk of federal highway budget cutbacks adds to the confusion.

Their uncertainty is shared by state and local governmental agencies. No city official or state highway department representative ever informed the Arnolds their home could be torn down if I-696 is approved. Officials from both the city and state say they are prohibited from informing residents that their homes will be purchased for the highway until construction is definite.

Arnold, who moved from Ann Arbor, said the person who sold him the lot mentioned that the property was along the path of a freeway proposed 25 years ago.

But, since the site was approved by city and state agencies, Arnold figured he was in the clear. Just to doubt-

lecheck, Arnold says he picked up a 1981 state highway map and was relieved to find no dotted lines designating a future highway running through Southfield on the map.

"WE SURE didn't build the home to have the freeway take it," Arnold said Tuesday. "I'm hoping and praying the federal funding doesn't go through and the freeway is cancelled."

"Even if the home is bought by the state we couldn't build one again like this. I changed jobs to build here. I took a month off from work. I'm not sitting on this property. It's not an investment, it's a home."

The shell of Arnold's kit-type home was built by Centennial Homes of Ann Arbor. Arnold installed the heat system, wiring, the trim and the carpeting. He did it to qualify for a low-cost MSHDA mortgage that, at the time,

limited persons from spending more than \$64,000 for a home.

The Arnolds moved to Southfield to be closer to the Bethesda Missionary Temple in Detroit where they're active. They picked the lot on Meadowood because Mrs. Arnold liked the woods there. One of the reasons, however, that much of the land is undeveloped is the very distinct possibility that the freeway will be built there.

It's only been three days since the closing and already the home has personal touches. Like the wallpaper in each child's bedroom. The bedroom of the oldest boy, Jonathan, 10, features racing car wallpaper while Russell, 9, picked "The Hulk" design and the youngest, Patrick, 7 1/2, opted for Superman graphics.

THE HOME has features such as in-laid green mosaic tile and hand-rubbed wood moulding. It's heated by a gas

furnace that heats not water and distributes it through baseboard radiators. An attached solar greenhouse and triple-glaze windows help to maximize energy efficiency.

"They'd hate to see all that dismantled in two or three years. David Hersh, administrative assistant in the Southfield Building Department, admits Arnold was never told he was building in the path of the freeway. Hersh said that's because the freeway route hasn't been finalized and because there are no grounds for refusing to issue a building permit just because a freeway might be built on the site."

"Right-of-way is not something we check out," Hersh said. "Usually the owner is pretty much aware of it. We have no right to deny. We've received no declaration from the state that you should not issue building permits in this area."

Man electrocuted while untangling kite

A 26-year-old Farmington Hills man was electrocuted Friday afternoon while trying to untangle a kite from an electrical wire, according to police and fire officials.

The victim, Santo Amara, 26, of Farmington Hills tried to dislodge the kite by hooking a golf club to the end of a long metal pole, according to firefighter Richard Marmucci. The incident occurred 2:15 p.m. Friday at Green-creek and 10 Mile Road, west of Inkster. Amara lived at 28133 10 Mile Road with his parents.

Attempts to revive Amara by firefighters and later by the staff at Botsford Hospital were unsuccessful.

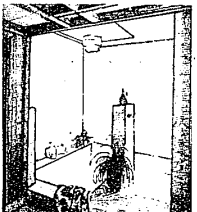
Amara was laid off from his job at Cadillac Assembly plant.

The funeral was Tuesday at Guardian Angels Church on Detroit's east side. Burial was in Holy Sepulchre Cemetery. Arrangements were handled by the Calcuttara Funeral Home.

Amara is survived by his parents, Grace and Sebastiano Amara of Farmington Hills; sisters, Mrs. Lisa Stockman, Mrs. Tina Wasung and Gina Amara; and grandparents Mrs. Lucille Cavatolo and Mrs. Rosaria Amara.

The family requests that persons wishing to make donations should address them to the Farmington Community Center in the name of Santo Amara.

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