

Less clutter sought

Farmington ponders window signs

By Craig Piechura
staff writer

To improve the appearance of business fronts in Farmington, City Council members are considering enacting regulations limiting the amount of window signs which business owners may post.

The Farmington Planning Commission has recommended to the council that window signs be restricted to a maximum 40 percent of the window area. When combined with the existing outdoor sign, the total signs can't exceed 50 percent of the square footage on the entire building, under terms of the proposed ordinance.

At present, there are no restrictions governing window signs in the city of Farmington but there is an ordinance limiting outdoor signs to not more than 10 percent the size of the building front.

Councilman William Mitchell said Monday that the proposed ordinance is easier on larger businesses because they have more window space.

"The guy with little window space, he's penalized in a competitive sense against the guy with larger windows," Mitchell said.

Agreeing with this assessment is Bill Stanford, owner of two Maple Village Pharmacies in Farmington.

"I FEEL the way they're going about it is unfortunate," Stanford says. "It's all based on the size of your window. Half of our front is brick so I'm already penalized compared to Damman's Hardware, where they have total window frontage. Simply because he's all glass in front, he gets to use more signs."

"I personally think half-brick, half-glass is more attractive but because of that I can't put up as much sign as my competitor."

Council members tabled the ordinance recommended by the planning commission until the Aug. 2 meeting to allow two councilmen absent at Monday's meeting — Mayor Alton Bennett and Councilman William Hartsock —

the opportunity to vote on it.

Planning Commissioner William Burke, chairman of the window sign study, said the commission examined sign ordinances from surrounding cities such as Birmingham and found most restricted window signs to 25 percent of the window area.

Burke said the proposed ordinance should be something that will meet the aesthetic demands of residents without putting undue hardship on businesses.

In his presentation to the council, Burke made mention of a pictorial display showing various window displays in the city.

ALL BUT the "exceptionally extreme" examples of businesses cover-

ing almost all of their windows should have no trouble complying with provisions of the proposed ordinance, Burke said.

Businesses which presently exceed 30 percent of their frontage with signs include Maple Village pharmacies, Bel-Aire Drugs, Stocker's Market, Little Tony's Italian Bakery and the Grand-Q Party Store.

Two businessmen who've voiced strong opposition to the proposed ordinance include Stanford of Maple Village Pharmacies and the owner of Fashion Shoes.

"It's just another restrictive covenant against the merchants of the city and how we do business," Stanford says.

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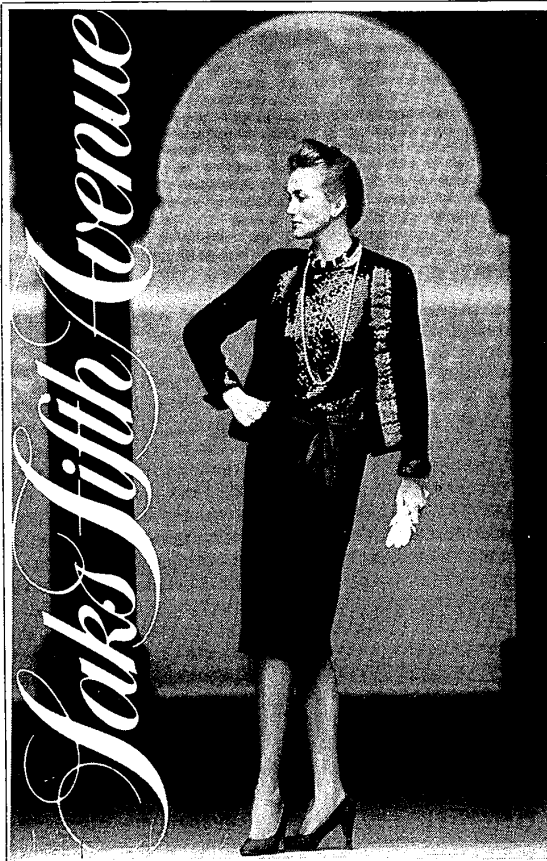
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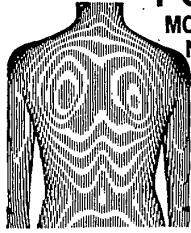
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