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How experts eye urban park development

By M.B. Dillon Ward
staff writer

City parks are vital in maintaining the health and sanity of the urban population, according to a recent study.

A study also found that the failure of government to provide public parks for physical activity and relaxation can cause people to succumb to socially destructive behavior and aggressive animal instincts.

The Parks Association of New York City, which conducted the study, also concluded that living compactly in cities is not normal to the human body or its nervous system, since neither evolved in an urban environment.

The physical and psychological stresses brought about by living in the city can be tolerated only by those in good health and sanity, it said.

Both the Farmington Hills and Oak-

land County parks and recreation departments are considering the purchase of a 210-acre parcel of land west of Farmington Road between 10 and 11 Mile roads.

Ideally suited to a wildlife preserve and a recreation area, it represents the only remaining piece of property Farmington Hills could acquire for use as a major city park. Birmingham attorney Nicholas Spicer inherited the land from his late mother, naturalist Eleanor Spicer.

THE NEED for persons to rebuild their relationships with the natural world is almost like the need for sleep, said Hayward Pearce, chairman of the biology department at Oakland Community College.

"A lot of people who've never spent a lot of time outdoors don't realize this, but once they start, they no longer need

to fight tension by taking pills, smoking and drinking.

"The Audubon Society has noticed this in its new members who've gone on trips.

"They tend to become more relaxed, and their job performance improves as well as their human relationships."

Delinquent youngsters given the opportunity to take camping trips in the woods tend to become less aggressive and better adjusted, according to studies, Pearce added.

UNLIKE THE UNITED STATES, most northern European countries are well-endowed with parks throughout major cities.

"The Europeans discovered quite a long time ago that if people can get out into natural spaces, they're more relaxed and less likely to become stressful," said Pearce.

analysis

The realization has encouraged a growing nationwide movement to promote city parks and the planting of trees in urban areas in this country.

The high cost of fuel and the decrease in travel brought on by the poor economy are adding to the movement's impetus, said Lawrence Falardeau, associate planner and landscape architect in the Oakland County Planning Department.

"Because of this tendency, and because land is being eaten up, we're seeing a lot more dollars being allocated

for urban recreation by the Department of Natural Resources and county planners in general," Falardeau said.

URBAN PARKS were the brainchild of Frederick Law Olmsted, respected as an American visionary and the founder of landscape architecture in the United States. He won his fame for designing Central Park in New York City in 1858.

"Olmstead's idea, which often is missed by planners, is that parks are not only art, but and fundamental social necessity for balancing our lives," said Urban Planning Professor Robert Champlin of Lawrence Institute of Technology in Southfield.

"He thought that if he could put a park near the downtown factories, employees working 12-hour shifts could at least spend a few minutes of the day away from the noise, irritation, confusion, smells and pollution inside the

building and get into a neutral place that's compatible with the way we feel and think.

"If you go into a lobby of a building to sit and rest, you still are confronted with busy people, noises, papers, perfume and phones ringing," said Champlin.

"**IN A PARK** you have the aesthetics of part of nature, quietness and the sense of being a little more alone.

"You're not in that rat race."

"People who live in a concrete and steel environment really are missing out on something," agreed Wallace Smith, an OCC communications professor who lives on a farm in northwest Oakland County.

"They're denied the serenity, tranquility and communion with our natural environment — that and some appreciation of our co-existence with the animal world, plants and grass."

Senior renters get aid

State Sen. Doug Ross, D-Southfield, announced Friday that the Legislature has enacted his plan to help senior citizens cope with rising apartment rents.

"Michigan seniors will no longer have to fear being pushed out of their apartments by rents that increase faster than their incomes," Ross said.

The new rent relief program is to be phased in over three years because of the state's tight budget, Ross said.

In 1982, any rent that tenants 65 or older pay which exceeds 50 percent of their incomes will be refunded to them through a state income tax credit, Ross said.

In 1983, all rent more than 45 percent of a senior tenant's income will be refunded. In 1984 and each year after, rent exceeding 40 percent of income will be refunded.

"This new program establishes a ceiling on a senior's rent based on that person's income," Ross said. "When fully in effect in 1985, the program will insure that no senior is forced to pay more than 40 percent of his or her income in rent no matter how much rents rise in the years ahead."

ENACTMENT OF the rent relief program came after a difficult four-year legislative battle, Ross said.

"When I was first elected to the Senate in 1978, I received a great many letters and calls from seniors unable to keep up with rising rents. Many were terribly frightened.

"A Treasury Department study revealed that more than a third of all Michigan senior renters already were paying more than 40 percent of their incomes in rent. Furthermore, nearly all these seniors had incomes of less than \$8,000 a year. Action was urgently needed."

With the help of a number of Oakland County seniors led by Charles Driker and Molly Pitzak, a similar version of the rent relief program was passed in 1980, Ross said. But funding was tied to another measure which died in the House, he said.

"The seniors never gave up. And with the help of sympathetic apartment owners, we finally prevailed."

Passage was made even more urgent by recent Reagan administration decisions to severely cut back funding for low and moderate-income housing for the nation's seniors, Ross said.

"This program will enable seniors to hold on with some peace of mind until we figure out how to provide decent housing that many of our elderly can afford."

Gov. Milliken is expected soon to sign the measure, Ross said.

Phone fun

Reader response to last Thursday's Oral Quareel has been so overwhelming that we kept the phone line open through the weekend to accept your responses. In today's edition on Page 6A you will find responses accepted through noon on Friday.

On Thursday we will have more responses on how residents feel about the purchase of the Spicer property.



Waiting for yet unfound brother, Paul is a spot in Heights; (seated on chair, left) Norah Cimaglia, the Ashbaugh family photo. Pictured are (stand- 34, Willis; Cindy Robb, 26, Marine City; (seated on chair, left) Peter, 41, of Warren; Gerry Gwyn, 46, Utio- floor, left) Diane Materna, 30, Warren; and Lucy ca; Mark, 27, Marine City; Nancy Ferguson, 36, Searcy, 31, Ferndale. Not pictured are Fred, 44, of Royal Oak; Jim, 24, Marine City; Frank, 39, Sterling Royal Oak and Pat Theisen, 33, of Cincinnati, Ohio.

One is missing

'Lost' family members find each other

By Karen Hermes Smith
staff writer

Pete and Lucille Ashbaugh's children hope they'll be able to pose someday for a complete family portrait.

Since 12 of the 13 siblings were reunited after 23 years in April, several pictures have been taken of them.

But missing from the photos is the youngest of them, brother Paul, who still has not been found.

The Ashbaugh children's story is a touching one — a story about how brothers and sisters who loved each other, were torn apart, then reunited again in adulthood, after years of searching, to find each other as they always imagined they'd be.

In about September 1953, their mother suffered a nervous breakdown.

Her four older children — Gerry, Fred, Peter and Frank — were capable of caring for themselves while she was ill.

Nancy, the middle child, a former Birmingham School District employee, went to live with her grandparents.

THE YOUNGER five — Norah, Pat, Lucy, Diane and the baby, Paul — were placed in foster homes, then later adopted.

Mr. Ashbaugh couldn't care for the children himself. "I think he was overwhelmed by it," Nancy said. "And at that time, the courts just came in."

Nancy recalls the heartbreak. "Children were her (my mother's) whole world," she said. "It wasn't her choice (that they were taken away)."

"I can remember riding for miles on a bus to visit Norah (while she was still in a foster home)."

Once the children were adopted, the Ashbaughs were no longer permitted to see or contact them. They weren't even told the names of the families they were adopted by.

"Once they're adopted you can't have anymore contact," Nancy said.

"The child has to be willing (to search for his natural family)."

When Mrs. Ashbaugh regained her health, she gave birth to three more children — Mark, Cindy and Jim, whom Nancy then grew up with.

Over the next 29 years, the Ashbaugh children anguished over their separation, hurt over early memories and always wondered whether someone they saw in a store, or on the street, was their brother or sister.

"I THOUGHT about it all the time," said Nancy, who was 7 when her sisters and brother were adopted away.

"All those years, I remembered their birthdays — it was important to me, I guess, to hang onto everything I had."

"Then I sort of buried it because it was too painful. But then I'd see someone, and I'd think, 'Are we related?'"

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Money woes engulf foes in debate

By M.B. Dillon Ward
staff writer

Republican John Anderson, candidate for state Senate in the 15th District, contends the voting record of his opponent, Sen. Jack Faxon (D-Detroit), proves he has the wrong kind of experience.

The 15th District includes Farmington, Farmington Hills, Southfield, Letrup Village, Novi, Northville, Wixom, Huntington Woods, Oak Park and Ferndale.

Anderson's charge came last week during the taping of "Mostly Business," a weekly television show that will air in Southfield at 7 p.m. Oct. 19 on channel 11 on cable TV. The show is sponsored by Continental Cablevision and the Southfield Chamber of Commerce.

Faxon, known for his strong support of the arts and education, is president pro tem of the Senate and a 17-year veteran of the state Legislature. He countered Anderson's attack saying his experience, particularly in the area of education, renders him an "extremely effective" legislator.

A 31-year-old attorney, with a prominent local law firm, and a former manufacturing executive, Anderson is chairman of the Southeastern Oakland County Boy Scout district. He is past vice president of the Farmington area Chamber of Commerce.

FURTHER CHALLENGES by Anderson sparked the political rivals' discussion of the state's ailing economy.

With regard to workers' compensation reforms, Faxon said, "we've just passed significant reforms that already have impacted the business community with a 29-percent reduction in premiums. Historically, people have blamed the users, not the insurers. What we've found is that insurers have easily made the reductions."

Contested Anderson: "He says 'we' made these changes in workers' compensation laws. I'd like to point out that with respect to three key votes on workers' compensation, Jack Faxon was absent from the Legislature."

"To me that demonstrates carelessness towards the single most important area of legislation affecting revitalization of the economy to come down the road in this legislative session."

"IT'S IMPORTANT to know," replied Faxon, "my attendance record puts me in the top 5 percent among my colleagues. The workers' comp votes would not have been affected by my absence or presence."

To that Anderson said, "To say his vote wouldn't have made any difference to me seems beyond belief."

Faxon said he was absent because "I

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Jack Faxon



John Anderson

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