


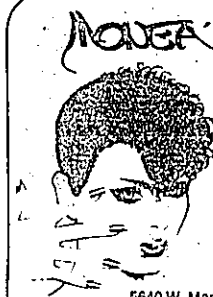
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Subdivision spirit continues to grow

By Mary Lou Callaway
special writer

DON'T MENTION low-income, federally funded housing in West Bloomfield in 1983.

But back in 1938, one of the township's loveliest subdivisions was built for 150 families in a \$25-\$30 a month income bracket.

Westacres subdivision houses, off Commerce Road between Hiller and Union Lake roads, were built of cement block without basements on one acre of land, each selling for \$4,489.

Today, those 1,275-square-foot homes, renovated and expanded, sell for about \$90,000 average.

Oakland Housing Inc., founded by Michigan's late U.S. Sen. James Couzens, funded the community with a Federal Emergency Relief Administration grant for \$350,000 and Couzens' donation of \$550,000.

Qualified buyers were given 30-year land contracts at only 3-percent interest.

Nothing was given away. It was not a relief program.

BECAUSE OF the instability of factory wages in the early days, the homeowners farmed their acre lots and sold produce at a roadside market where the Westacres branch library is expanding today.

The warm, community togetherness during the depth of the depression still pre-

vals. A credit union established in 1936, a rarity among subdivisions, still functions. The subdivision newspaper (published weekly), rummage sales and neighborhood activities draw neighbors together.

The annual Westacres Artists Market fair attracts residents from several other communities.

The old library branch once was upstairs in the frame clubhouse, now replaced by a new clubhouse on the Middle Straits Lake beach. There also is a Westacres Women's Club.

An early forerunner to car pooling, still operating, is the "Chrysler" bus, of course, but Chrysler workers still can get to their jobs by the transportation system they originated.

NOW AN AFFLUENT area, Westacres yards are so beautifully landscaped they fit compatibly with the newer homes built since the early housing experiment began.

Look-alike houses originally, they now cannot be distinguished from each other. Many have sold for more than \$100,000.

At last count, there were about 17 of the original owners still enjoying Westacres, said Dolores Stock, who, with her husband, Henry, moved into their three-bedroom, one-car garage home 47 years ago.

"We love the community. Now there are third generation families here, the grandchildren of the original owners," said

Please turn to Page 10

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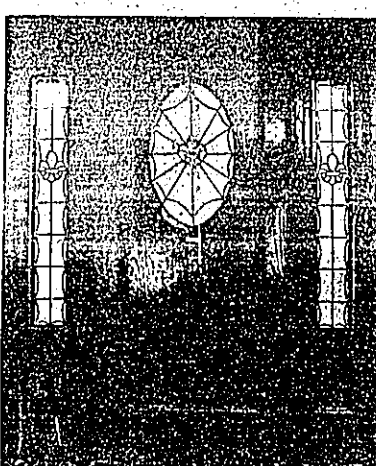
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