## Northwestern development split friends and neighbors

rate along the thoroughfare. Only late 1970s, much to the pleasure ironmentalists, did state officials d plans to transform Northwest-

discard plans to transform Northwest-ern into a major freeway.

By that time, however, developers
had taken their cases for rezoning to court. Although the lawnuits were started before cityhood, after 1973 a couple of the cases were still unre-

RATHER THAN accepting an outright court decision or a later appeal on Northwestern's frontage property, city officials entered into consent judgments allowing office developments that could be restricted and to some degree controlled. "The village, the township (Farmington) and the city all lost in defending the residents," said City Planner Claude Coates.

While Farmington Hills officials realized the need for some commercial development along the thoroughfare, they also realized they had to protect its citizens and the residential areas. The consent judgments were a way of doing both.

THERE WERE six consent judg-ments along Northwestern, said Hal Rowe, Farmington Hills soning super-visor.

Four parcels of land, called outlots "Four parcels of land, called outlots A, B, C, and D were changed from single-family to office xoding Farmington Township also was unable to maintain single-family xoning on the northeast corner of Northwestern and 13 Mile.

After clybood, the southwest corner of that same intracection was also changed to office. A sixth corner, the northwestern was changed to office the set of Valley and Northwestern was changed to office uses, with restrictions.

Even as the battle raged in court, followed by the consent judgments, village residents continued to raily for preventing commercial growth.

"THERE WERE a lot of railles to t people to continue the battles,"

get people to continue the battles,"
O'Brien said.
"You're talking about people who
had moved out here in the late '40s.
This was a rural area," be continued.
"We were roully not that interested in

having the city come in to begin with."
What the village was, O'Drien said,
was a community of older people who
were "villing and able to take care of
their own needs."
First of all, they wanted no part of
joining Farmington Hills. Residents
had their own wells, septic tanks and
bottled gas. Fire and police protection
was contracted.

WHEN CHARTER commissioners were drafting a city charter, village residents heavily criticized the document for not including any provisions to prevent the resoning of the area from residential to commercial.

from residential to commercial.
Later, when the city agreed to a consent judgment, David Goldman, a leader of the former village, said the commercial development was similar to the "domino theory" because it was threatening the residential zoning of the village,
"A lot of the attitudes and reasons for doing things have changed,"
O'Brien conceded.

BUTTHE foundation behind the village residents' strong fight against commercial development and even joining the city can be traced to the philosophy behind the village.

The creation of the village, O'Brien said, was based on many 'preconceived ideas," buttressed by George Wellington Smith, who owned most of the residential land.

"He tried to stop time," O'Brien said, adding that potential village homeowners were "sold on the idea that it was a village that time forgot."
Although traffic along Northwestern was increasing, that wasn't so much of a concern even when coupled with possible commercial development, O'Brien said.

"THE CONCERN was property devaluation, specifically the homes abutting the Northwestern frontage," O'Brien said.

Define said.

But residents, whether right or wrong, were straid development along the thoroughfare would bring in 'undesirables' that would novitably result in a crime increase and other problimation of the said of the sa

AS IT turned out, the fear of de-valued property was unfounded. Prop-erty along Northwestern has become a commercial as well as residential gold

"There has been such an appreciation of property value all along bero,"
O'Brien said.
Most of the residents of the former
village have now reconciled themselves to the office development along
Northwestern.
"You can't please everybody all the

time," O'Brien said. "In a general sense, they (city officials) have done a relatively good job in making it aesthetically pleasing."

THE APPEARANCE of Northwestern, despite the office buildings residents fought so many years to provent, didn't come naturally.

Instead, city officials in the late 1970s saw "the hand writing on the wall," Rowe said. With six coosent judgments, there was little doubt the bottom line, would be office development along Northwestern.

With that realization, "we decided to

With that realization, "we decided to come up with a satisfactory compro-

mise with the residents," Howe said.

The "motual solution" city officials were looking for that could soothe residents as well as provide for controlled office development came in the form of special soning (03-3).

"THE TRING was to provide reasonable use of land while protecting residential land as much as possible," said Coates.

Armod with the 03-3 zone extending to 13 Mile, city officials have managed to force developers to maintain as much of the natural topography and vegetation of land while sitiowing "reasonable development" of the land.

onance neveropment" of the land.

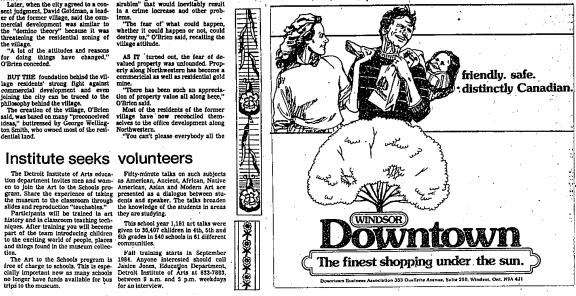
To protect the residential areas be-

hind Northwestern's commercial front, the CS-3 zone requires developers to add a 40-foot greenbelt between the buildings and the single-family bornes.

buildings and the single-family bornes.

THE OFFICE buildings additionally must sit a minimum 102 feet away from the subdivisions and 30 percent of the front yard on Northwestern must be open without parking facilities, Coates said. The office buildings may be only 30 feet or two story's tail so residents don't see a skyscraper when they look out of their windows.

With the height restriction "the overall density is much reduced from what it could be," said City Manager William Costick.



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pressure.

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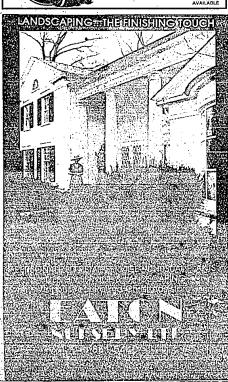
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