

# Southfield man heads county parks

After an extensive search, Oakland County Parks and Recreation Commission has chosen a Southfield man as its new manager.

Ralph Richard, 42, Southfield parks and recreation director since 1978, will take over Jan. 2 as manager of the county system, with its 70 full-time employees and 3,700 acres of parks.

He has headed a system of 35 employees and 600 acres in Southfield, where he was noted for his work with historical preservation, cultural offerings and the handicapped.

Richard replaces R. Eric Reickel, who resigned in August to become Wayne County parks and recreation director.

"I'M THRILLED by the opportunity to run a good system like Oakland's," Richard said. "It's one of the most outstanding in the nation."

"As county director, I will stand back, look at what they're doing and work with the commission on new programs," Richard said.

Richard will leave his Southfield post at the end of December. He was deputy director from 1978 to 1979. Before coming to Southfield, he served eight years as director of parks and recreation for Waterford Township.

Earlier, he held recreation posts in Ann Arbor and Redford Township.

He is a graduate of Eastern Michigan University with a bachelor's and master's in business administration and recreation.

Lewis Wint, chairman of the county agency, praised Richard's "exceptional professional background and experience. His extensive career in parks and recreation in Oakland County makes him very valuable in helping to achieve the goals of the commission."

DURING HIS years with Southfield, Richard developed six of the city's 18 parks. He oversaw development of Simmes Park, Bedford Woods Park, John Grace Park, Bruce Park, Evergreen Woods and the Inglenook Park.

Southfield's system has gained a state reputation for innovative wood-form play lots. Next spring, Civic Center Park will be revamped so that

its play structures are accessible to the handicapped.

Richard took particular interest in preserving history at the city's Village Green, Berg and Civic Center Drive, in senior citizen programming and in the division of cultural arts, which provides concerts and gardens.

"One of the things I'm proudest of is the way the cultural part of the city developed," he said. "Very few cities across the states do what we do."

Richard will serve as Michigan Parks and Recreation Association treasurer in 1985 and has served as chairman of the Clinton River Waterford Recreation Association and state Senior Citizen Committee.

He is also secretary for the Michigan Employee Services and Recreation Association.

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— Ralph Richard



# Regional economic outlook — level in '85, up in '86

The experts agree: Southeast Michigan will see a leveling in economic growth in 1985 but another takeoff in 1986.

High interest rates will make 1985 "not brilliant but rather bright" for auto sales and cause a slight drop in housing starts, five speakers told the Economic Club of Detroit last week.

"A continuation of the current recovery at a more normal and sustainable growth rate" was predicted by Dr. Barbara B. Murray, professor of business in the school of management at the University of Michigan-Dearborn. She predicted a 3.5 percent real growth rate in '85 compared to 6.5 percent in '84.

BUT MURRAY was less fearful than automotive and construction industry analysts about federal deficits pushing up the cost of credit. The U.S. has been able to tap "the increasing source of an international savings pool to finance our credit demands," she said, pointing to this as a major structural change in the American economy.

A second, positive structural change, Murray said, has been the replacement of obsolete plant and equipment, resulting in productivity increases. Commodity, petroleum and health care costs will be held in check, translating into an inflation rate of 4.2 percent, the economist predicted.

Murray predicted federal domestic and defense spending cuts and a tax increase on consumer goods.

Here is what four business leaders for their segments of the regional economy:

**CONSTRUCTION** — After a good 1983-84 recovery, residential starts



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## "If you've driven up Northwestern Highway in Southfield and West Bloomfield recently, you can almost feel the vibrancy of the economic recovery."

— William Fordon  
Fordon Co. chairman

will drop a little in 1985, said William Fordon, board chairman of the Fordon Co., Birmingham.

"That's primarily because interest rates rose from 12 to 15 percent this year and stayed there. Higher interest rates will deter home starts more than they will adversely affect non-residential work," he said.

But commercial-industrial construction will continue to help construction, Fordon said. He cited the Downtown People Mover, Millender Center, Stroh Riverfront project, Burroughs headquarters, Ford Casting plant in Flat Rock and the Chrysler expansion in Sterling Heights.

"If you've driven up Northwestern Highway in Southfield and West Bloomfield recently, you can almost feel the vibrancy of the economic recovery," Fordon added.

Public works projects have increased from a 1982 level of \$150 million to a current level of \$400 million, he said, thanks to transportation taxes at the state and federal levels. Meanwhile, wage rates have stabilized, and

the construction industry's unemployment rate has dropped from 55 percent in 1983 to 29 percent currently, with more drops due in 1985, Fordon predicted.

**AUTOMOTIVE** — A slight decline in total auto sales will be felt mostly by American manufacturers, according to Thomas F. Russell, board chairman and chief executive of Federal-Mogul Corp., Southfield-based manufacturer of automotive and industrial parts.

Domestic auto makers will see sales dip from the current eight million to 7.7 million next year, while foreign producers will see their sales rise from 2.5 million to 2.8 million units. Total sales will drop from the current 10.4 million to 10.5 million next year.

Most of the pent-up demand due to the recession has been satisfied, he explained.

But the last half of '85 and '86 will see improvement, "depending on the direction of interest rates, which in turn will depend on what happens in

our struggle with the deficit, Russell said.

On the other hand, 1985 will see real improvements in the automotive "aftermarket" — repairs of existing cars — because of slower growth in incomes and the aging of the car fleet, he said.

**RETAIL** — Retail sales in Michigan will rise 8 percent, better than the 7.5 percent national increase, according to Robert B. Carlson, president and chief

executive of Crowley, Milner Co., which has department stores in Birmingham, Livonia and Farmington.

While calling metropolitan Detroit "a tremendous retail market," Carlson said it is marked by intense price competition and profit deterioration from the retailer's point of view.

The Crowley chief split the retail market into three segments:

- Baby Boomers, 25-44 — With average household incomes of \$22,000.

• "Prime Lifers," in their 50s — With average household incomes of \$28,000, they have good health and want to protect it with health clubs, beauty parlors and vitamins.

• Mature 60s — "The wealthiest, healthiest and most self-reliant older population in our history" contains good prospects for optical centers, drug stores, home health care, home improvement, home furnishing, travel and hobbies.



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