

# Farmington Observer

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Wildflowers dot the lush meadows of the Spicer as a community outdoor recreation area leaves property. Will a master plan for its development beauty like this undisturbed?

## Big project

### State orders master plan update

By Lisa Gilson  
staff writer

Farmington Hills will update its master plan for parks and recreation before taking further action to develop an outdoor recreation center on the highly valued Spicer property, north of 11 Mile and west of Farmington roads.

"That's because in order to get more federal money for development of the 213 acres of prime real estate, state Department of Natural Resources (DNR) officials have ordered that the eight-year-old plan be revised."

"We have accomplished a number of things in our master plan," said Eric Werminger, Hills assistant director of special services. "It's obsolete."

Farmington Hills City Council Aug. 12 approved a request to solicit plans from development consultants and landscape architects for both an overall master plan and specific uses for the Spicer property.

Council approved an information packet compiled by the parks and recreation commission, intended for prospective development consultants and landscape architects, with some revisions.

Bids on the project are the next step. The city expects to enter into an agreement with a consulting

firm by Sept. 15 and to complete the master plan by Jan. 1, 1986.

THE SPICER site is the largest tract of publicly held land in Farmington Hills. Purchase was completed in April through a \$12.3 million grant from the Michigan Land Trust Fund (MLTF) and \$800,000 supplied

Stokes, executive secretary of the Michigan Natural Resource Trust Fund (MNRTF), the new name for MLTF.

"Five years is very subjective," Werminger said. "Master plans don't really expire. I've worked in towns where 11-year-old master

***'It's a good idea to put the use (of the Spicer property) in perspective and look at what else has happened in the city.'***

—Dennis Fitzgerald

by the city of Farmington Hills.

Werminger left little doubt that Farmington Hills will go for more federal money to develop the project. "We'd be silly not to," he said. "It's out there."

City officials were told in March that the 1977 master plan had to be updated before any further applications for federal money would be considered.

"An up-to-date recreation plan that is no more than five years old," is one of the stipulations for procuring a grant, according to Rodney

plans" were used to receive grants, he added.

OTHER REQUIREMENTS necessary for a federal land grant include a local government resolution or city council approval. Procured funds must be used only for outdoor recreational facilities, and matched funds from any community, Stokes said. There is no maximum financial request.

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## Downtown gears up to battle new malls

By Joanne Maliszewski  
staff writer

If city officials, downtown merchants and residents have their way, Farmington's central business district will take its place among the attractive and commercially strong shopping areas in the metropolitan area.

"Every town needs to be updated once in a while to make it desirable," said Harry Wingerter, chairman of a relatively new city-sponsored central business district committee.

The committee of merchants and residents was formed in early spring to examine the future of the downtown area and to develop a strategy for continued growth. Members meet once a month to review work completed by smaller task forces. The next meeting will be at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Sept. 18 in Farmington City Council chambers.

The Grand River and Farmington Road shopping area has met with increased competition over the last decade with the construction of several new shopping centers — Twelve Oaks in Novi, Hunter's Square on Orchard Lake and 14 Mile, as well as several other smaller shopping malls in the area.

The study comes on the heels of the announcement last year that the Farmer Jack supermarket is leaving its Farmington Road and State Street location for a new center on Nine Mile

and Farmington roads.

TO FULLY investigate the problems and needs facing downtown, the committee formed four task forces which have been assigned to complete specific studies of the downtown, Wingerter said.

"Each of these committees is feeding their information into the main committee," said Wingerter, owner of the Bon Ton Shoppe on Farmington Road. With the help of an architectural planner and retail expert, committee members will make final decisions on what avenue to take in updating downtown once the task forces have completed their work.

The consumer task force is studying the downtown's current offerings of retail shops. When that's completed, the task force's next job will be to determine what additional kinds of businesses would attract shoppers, Wingerter said.

The services task force is studying the ever-constant problem of parking and traffic patterns in the downtown district, he continued. Public restrooms are also considered necessary in today's shopping areas, Wingerter said.

"These are the things that would serve the public who comes to town," Wingerter said. Members of the communications task force are studying how to better promote the downtown retail shops through devices such as group advertising and improved public relations with potential shoppers.

***'So go downtown, things will be great when you're downtown. No finer place for sure, downtown, everything's waiting for you.'***

— "Downtown" composer Tony Hatch

"They're also studying the need for better intercommunications between the residents (downtown) and the merchants," he said.

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## Anhut leads state chamber

By Joanne Maliszewski  
staff writer

Revising the state's worker's compensation laws is the number one priority for Farmington Hills businessman John Anhut in his new position as head of the Michigan State Chamber of Commerce.

"We're going to try to amend workmen's comp so it's a livable law and puts us in competition with other states," said Anhut, president of historic Botsford Inn in Farmington Hills. "Indiana and Ohio just make us look sick."

Anhut was elected in early August as chairman of the board of directors of the state chamber of commerce for a one-year term.

Anhut has been a director on the state chamber's 87-member board since 1978. His involvement has included setting policy on major economic, legislative and social issues affecting the state's economy.

Changing the compensation laws, particularly the disability provisions, is one of several characteristics about Michigan that Anhut feels need revising if the state is to become economically competitive.

"If we just went on a parity with our competition," Michigan would have a much improved business climate, Anhut said.

"WE LOST Saturn. GM is not stupid. Our climate is still not conducive to new business. We have a work force, but an expensive one."

As a watchdog of the Michigan Legislature, the state chamber can help to improve the economic climate, Anhut said.

"The Michigan State Chamber of Commerce is committed to providing leadership on issues important to the overall vitality of Michigan's business and economic climate. As a statewide business organization we are concerned with the creation of jobs and expansion of opportunities throughout the state."

Another of Anhut's goals is to get Gov. James Blanchard to roll back more of the income tax increase levied several years ago.

"Really, he's sitting on a bonanza. We're not going to let him play with it." Other than the "Say Yes to Michigan" promotion, Blanchard has done little to improve the state's competitive edge in drawing new business to Michigan, Anhut charged.



John Anhut

Along similar lines, there's a growing movement within the state chamber to have the personal property tax greatly reduced, particularly on businesses, he said. Small business operators in Michigan have a financially

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## Hills nixes school rezoning

By Marie Chetney  
staff writer

A Farmington Hills businessman who bought a close school with an eye toward renovating it into an apartment building has hit a snag.

The same snag also would have hit a small group of American Muslims of Indian and Pakistani descent who in August filed a \$1.2 million ethnic and religious discrimination suit against the Clarensville School District.

The group filed the suit after the district bypassed its \$97,000 offer for the building and sold it for \$47,525 to John White, a retired Farmington Hills manufacturer's representative and owner of Farmington Distribution Center on Grand River Avenue.

The snag is the land's present residential zoning. To do anything to the five acres, on Oxbow between Robinson and Sennylade, besides building homes, requires a change in its present zoning.

And, as evidenced by the Farmington Hills Planning commission's unanimous denial vote Thursday, the city is not eager to rezone the land. The Farmington Hills City Council is expected to uphold the denial next month, said Hal Rowe, the city's planning consultant.

"WE TOLD him (White) before he bought the land that it (the land) did not meet zoning access requirements," Rowe said.

If the Muslims had bought the land, they would have experienced the same turnaround, Rowe said. Group spokes-

man Syed S. Mohiuddin said the Muslim investors planned to renovate the school into a nursery school, cultural center and eventually into a full-time school and church. They also

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