

City seeks input on planned DDA district

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marketing study Tuesday, Jan. 14 at a full DDC meeting. This information will also be presented at the Feb. 3 public hearing, according to Robert Schultz, administrative aide to the city manager.

"We've found a DDA is the most effective tool when competing with the numerous competitive forces attempting to denude downtowns," Wacany added. "The authority must be there to constantly seek opportunities."

The proposed ordinance was drafted

by Farmington resident and attorney John Donohue. It calls for a DDA board, including Farmington City Manager Robert Deadman and eight members appointed by the mayor and approved by council.

A 1975 state act allows establishment of a DDA with autonomous decision-making powers relating to public improvements. The intent of a DDA is to promote economic growth, increase property values, bolster and commercial tax base and strengthen ties be-

tween merchants in the central business district.

City Manager Robert Deadman assured the council a program-type budget and program approval would be retained by the city. "They act independently, and have a lot of authority in their own right," he said.

Although the first DDA budget would be approved "whenever it occurs," the DDA budget would eventually be placed on the same fiscal year schedule, Deadman added.

A public body, a DDA holds powers,

similar to a corporation, to own, buy, sell and lease property and to engage in economic activity.

A TOTAL of 147 businesses and professional offices are included in the DDA district, plus seven houses on Thomas Street and six on Orchard Street, Schultz said. Also involved are secondary residences above downtown businesses. Those property owners affected by the proposed DDA district will be sent notices of the Feb. 3 public hearing, Deadman said.

If the DDA is approved, an up-to-

two-mill tax, allowed under a DDA, will most likely be levied on property owners in the district, Schultz said. This revenue can be used for ongoing maintenance, promotion, security and continued operation of a redevelopment project, according to legislation passed in 1984. This would allow an administrative aide, or project manager,

to be hired, according to Schultz. Previously, its use was restricted to preliminary planning work. Financing for development and future planning for a DDA can be obtained by several means, including tax increment financing, revenue bonds, private capital, federal grants and money from the city's general fund.

Ernie Ajlouny, up close

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was "close to retiring" before they opened the local restaurant 1½ years ago.

He likens business — especially his — to a stage production.

"Actually, I do most of my routines behind the counter," he said. "I use humor to lessen the tension while people are waiting."

About 300 people a day come into the deli and have more than 100 menu items from which to select.

"Someone is always associating you with the end of your act," he said, continuing the scenario. "It's the finished product they remember."

One small flaw in a sandwich, and the whole meal is ruined, he added.

AJLOUNY'S APPLAUSE comes when he and employees receive a compliment for something special. "It's here," he said, pointing to his heart, and talking about the business of dealing with people.

The recent spirit that has developed in downtown Farmington is special to Ajlouny. "I've always wanted to have a small deli in a small town," he said.

The family spent three months remodeling the former Kowalski sausage shop in Farmington before opening. "The shop had seen its day — it needed new blood," he said.

"We tried to involve others

around us," he said about the renovation. "It's amazing what you can do with a little bit of paint — the personality takes over from there."

His activities in Ann Arbor since 1972 have shown him what can be done with a downtown area.

HIS CREDO for a downtown business district is "It doesn't matter what you're selling, as long as you can service people."

His wife serves on the steering committee of the Downtown Farmington Development Committee, Ajlouny added.

Ajlouny considers himself a teacher of the food business as well as a promoter, and schools employees in his people-oriented business philosophy and attitude.

"The best training is the old corner store," he said, "where a kid can buy a quart of milk and learn how to handle money."

Ajlouny said his family, including 13-year-old daughter and 23-year-old son, were involved in the food business, on and off, but have their own interests, which he encourages.

"AFTER WORKING 100 hours a week for 20 years, I paid my dues, and dues for the whole family," Ajlouny said.

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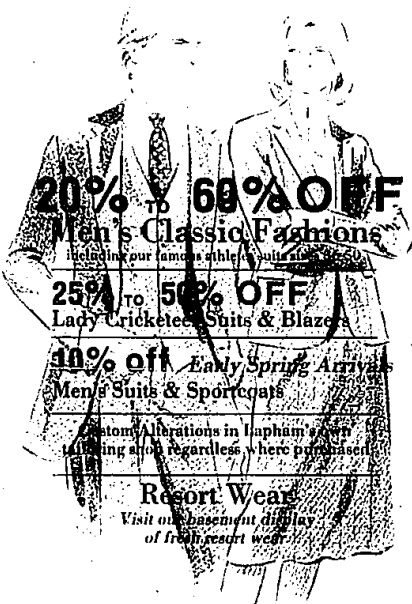
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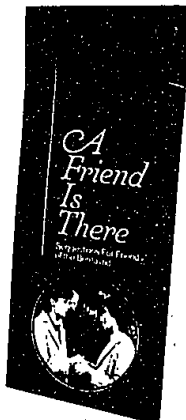
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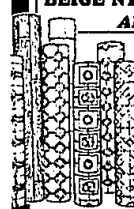
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