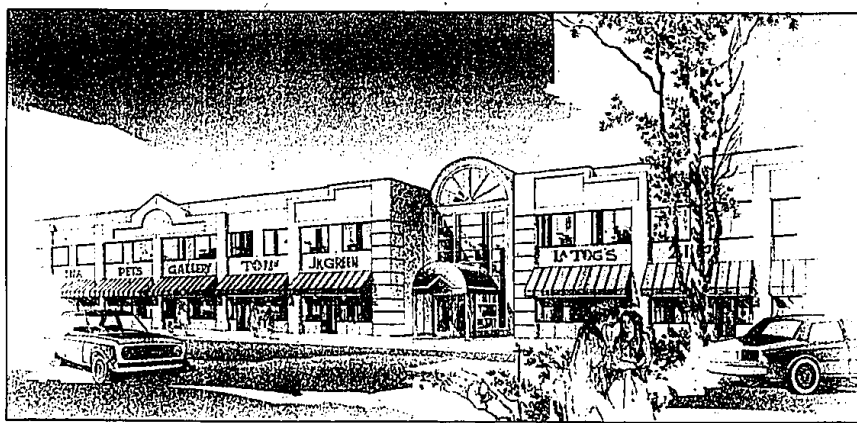


A worker climbs the scaffolding to put the finishing touches on the facade of the new Village Commons, under construction on Grand River, east of Farmington Road.

RANDY BORST/staff photographer



The Village Commons will have specialty shops and offices. Above is a drawing of part of the building, showing the all-glass entryway.

Village Commons

October opening eyed for development

By Casey Hane
staff writer

WITHIN MONTHS, downtown Farmington visitors will enjoy a host of specialty shops in the city's newest development, The Village Commons.

At 32800 Grand River, just east of the city's main crossroads, the new 55,000-square-foot building will have at least 12 retail, possibly 18, specialty shops and 23,000 square feet of offices on its second floor. It sits on the former site of the Farmington Lumber Co.

The project's developer is the Nelson/Ross Companies of Farmington Hills.

The company is hoping to allow tenants mid-October occupancy, according to Lisa Waterstone, director of leasing. Nelson/Ross is handling retail rentals and has an outside broker handling rental of the office space.

THREE RETAIL businesses — a tanning salon, a full-service cleaners and a window and door showroom — have already signed leases. Waterstone said she is negotiating with 10 other businesses, including a bulk food operator who may place a gourmet food store in the center.

Each store will be of a different type. No duplicate uses will be sold, she said.

"Ambiance — that's what we're trying to create," she added.

Waterstone likened the Farmington development with those seen in downtown Birmingham or Plymouth. "We're looking for small, specialty tenants; a combination of small, service-oriented tenants to either complement what is already here or to fill a void."

Entering into the off-street parking lot with 283 planned spaces, a visitor will find the first portion of the center with a brick front and staggered roof levels, filled with retail shops.

THE SECOND portion of the building will be two stories with retail units on the first floor and offices above, and will have a granite-like front to contrast with the brick, Waterstone said.

Between the granite-fronted buildings, a glass lobby front is planned. Awnings and canopies will be used extensively, she added.

Waterstone expects traffic for the building to be generated from a five-mile radius around downtown Farmington, which she called "a lovely area. She believes with the type of residents in the Farmington area, a specialty shopping area will be very successful."

She said the company "looks at the community and tailors it (the center) to their needs."

Nelson/Ross began planning the Farmington project more than one year ago, and broke ground for it in April.

"THE VILLAGE Commons is de-

signed for the local as well as the regional shopper and businessperson," literature from the company said. "It is a city block full of shops, services and offices — a tenant mix designed to meet the needs of the marketplace."

The Village Commons is included on the east side of the Farmington Downtown Development Authority district, which is involved in a revitalization of the city's central business district.

"Any addition would be helpful to the downtown, DDA chairman Harry Wingerter said. "If they bring more people, that would be fine."

The DDA contacted The Village Commons developers to advise them of the selection of pedestrian lighting planned for the DDA district, he added. Having such a development on the north side of Grand River will make it important to the downtown areas, both north and south of Grand River, together, he said.

short takes

If you recently opened a shop, captured an award, earned a promotion or are planning a new venture or project — and there's a Farmington-area business angle — we'd like to hear from you so we can share your news item with other Farmington Observer readers. Send items to: Short takes, Farmington Observer, 33203 Grand River, Farmington 48024.

● ACTION FILMS

King Kong is back, only this time it's not a beautiful blonde he's after but his favorite radio station.

It's the latest of several live action film spots with classic movie influences from Bob Dyke of Magic Lantern Productions, Farmington Hills. The spot stars a giant gorilla for Chicago ad agency Zechman & Associates and its client, WTPJ-FM Radio, Indianapolis.

Laurie Berger, producer for Zechman & Associates, said the agency's concept for the spot was to create something unusual instead of the typical radio station spot. "We were really going for an old-style B-movie look in black and white. The stylized landscape, the gorilla's movements, even the grainy look of the spot were all deliberate."

After viewing reels from production companies in several cities, Berger chose Magic Lantern for its use of special effects and "old movie take-offs."

Dyke used a combination of live action film footage and video special effects to achieve the look he was after. Several Detroit-area companies were involved in the creation of the spot, which includes King Kong grabbing a car off the road and shaking it to adjust the radio dial to his favorite station.

The gorilla, the "star" of the spot, was custom-scripted by effects artist Roger White to the specifications of an actual life-size gorilla.

The head was worn as a mask, and though the actor inside the suit could manipulate the jaws and teeth, it took two more people behind him operating cables connected to the lips and eyebrows to give it realistic facial expressions. It also took 24 human-hair wigs to cover the gorilla with hair.

White had been working on the gorilla suit as an experiment in his spare time, but when contacted by Dyke, worked to finish the suit in two weeks. Bruce Brodner directed the spot and was able to bring character and personality to the giant gorilla. Tom Hitchcock of Super Structures created the miniature set, which included a road in forced perspective and a downtown city skyscraper landscape.

Bill Riss edited the film at Image Express in Southfield, meeting Dyke's requirements in 48 hours. Dyke then transferred the film to tape at Grace & Wild Studios in Farmington Hills with colorist Ron Anderson, supervisor of film services.

Grace & Wild's Scott Wasmuth used the paint function of the Symbolics graphics system. Senior videotape editor Jeff Fleck edited the 30- and 60-second spots.

Colleen Cook was producer for Magic Lantern. Don Cohen was director of photography. For Zechman & Associates, Tom Darbyshire wrote the spot, Dick Lemmon was the art director, and Harriett Trangelcel the production coordinator.

● GRAND OPENING

When the Arbor of Farmington store on Farmington Road opened this summer, city officials were on hand to cut the ribbon and local residents collected the grand-opening prizes.

Prize winners were: Elsie McKeown, WCR; Inne Shuster, 19-inch color television; and Roland Beck, microwave oven.

On hand at the grand opening were: Robert Deadman, city manager, Farmington; Ralph Yoder, city councilman, Farmington; Joe Duffy, district manager, Arbor Drugs Inc.; Terry Minier, store manager, Arbor of Farmington and Grand River; William Hartstock, mayor, Farmington; and Karen Siler, Arbor employee.

The store is at 23366 Farmington. It opened July 25.

● SHE'S PROMOTED

Judith Grant of Farmington Hills was promoted to assistant professor of nursing at Madonna College, Livonia.

She is a doctoral precandidate at the University of Michigan.

● BIG IN SALES

Tupperware Home Parties has announced Tina Malone was the number 54 manager in sales nationwide for the second quarter of 1988. She and her unit of dealers sold \$81,758 in Tupperware brand products from March 1988 through June 1988.

Malone is a Tupperware manager with the local authorized Tupperware distributorship, Action Party Sales Inc., Farmington Hills.

● NAMED MANAGER

Daniel Zechmeister was appointed structural engineer in a joint venture with the Masonry Institute of Michigan and Lawrence Institute of Technology's School of Architecture.

Zechmeister, in his capacity with the Masonry Institute, will primarily be responsible for providing masonry design and construction assistance to Michigan's architects and structural engineers. At Lawrence Institute of Technology, he will teach structural classes several hours each week in the School of Architecture starting this fall.

For the past two years, Zechmeister worked for the city engineering department of Detroit as an associate civil engineer assigned to the inspection bureau, where he was responsible for the execution of building contracts related to the construction of municipal projects.

Previously, he was employed for nearly five years with Albert Kahn Associates in Detroit and almost three years with Campbell Associates Inc., Detroit, as a structural engineer. Responsibilities involved the design of super and substructures for engineering projects as well as the preparation of structural plans and specifications.

Zechmeister is a registered professional engineer.

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