

Outgoing Hills mayor evaluates year

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

Former Mayor Joe Alkateeb describes 1986 as the year of planning for Farmington Hills.

"The main thrust of my administration was to get the city on a definite plan so we know where we are going," Alkateeb said.

With development continuing near the record pace set in 1985, the need for major planning to address growing problems and increased public demands — roads, parks and recreation and public safety — was essential, he said.

Consider that in 1986 the city issued building permits for 644 single-family houses and 901 multiple units, he said. In addition, permits for the construction of 877,000 square feet of office and 452,000 square feet of industrial use also were approved.

Naturally, with all of the growth experienced in the past several years, our greatest challenge during 1986 was to continue to try to address many of our infrastructure problems," Alkateeb said. "And I am pleased to see much was accomplished during this year."

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Farmington Hills mayor

COMPLETION OF A three-year major road improvement program and parks and recreation master plan highlighted 1986. A five-year plan for the fire department was also completed and work is continuing on similar plans for the police department and Farmington Community Library, Alkateeb said.

Other accomplishments during 1986 included voter approval of a \$7 million bond issue for major road improvements as well as a 5-mill levy for five years for parks and recreation development.

"I think we had a great, great year. Basically every department throughout the city has a plan," he said.

After years of often strained communications and relations between the city council and the Farmington Board of Education, Alkateeb said he believes "we ushered in a new era of cooperation."

Relations admittedly were strained when Farmington Hills attempted to implement, against

school officials' wishes, a tax increment financing authority along the 12 Mile Road corridor. But cooperation, especially in light of a recognized need for improved parks and recreation and youth athletic needs, has improved greatly, he said.

THOUGH THE TIFA effort proved unsuccessful for the city in 1986, Alkateeb said efforts to bridge Oakland County and the state to do something about the corridor are continuing.

"In the road department, I think we achieved a lot more than we had hoped," he added.

As mayor, Alkateeb said he viewed his role as three-fold. He attempted to serve as the city's political leader, the "face of the city" — representing the city at various functions — and as city council leader.

"I tried to carefully play these three roles," he said.

While one of his goals was to completely unify an often divided coun-

cil, Alkateeb said he believes he "succeeded at least 83 percent of the time. I tried to keep the council informed. By following that policy, I think I had a pretty smooth year."

Despite his attempt, however, rifts between council members, particularly Alkateeb and Councilwoman Joan Dudley, occurred.

WITH A council well-known for long and verbose meetings, Alkateeb said he also attempted to keep council comments and discussion brief and close to the issue.

He also tried to apply that practice by limiting residents' comments to three minutes. Though the policy liked some residents, Alkateeb said he feels his goal of keeping meetings within a reasonable time limit was successful.

Another of Alkateeb's goals was to improve relations between the city and the public.

"I answered every letter I received. And I don't think there was ever a case of complaint that I did not answer in five days," he said. "As mayor, you have to get to these people and explain to them how the government works. You have to get the facts out."

In fact, Alkateeb's advice to new Mayor Ben Marks is to continue improving the city's relationship with the public.

"My advice is that you have to keep your ears to the ground and listen to what the people are saying," Alkateeb said.

THAT NOTION is of particular importance as the city continues toward full development and "people are getting ideas that Farmington Hills is disintegrating," Alkateeb said.

As conflicts grow between residents and developers who want to develop the remaining open land in the city, the mayor must stay in tune with the wishes and demands of residents, as well as the developers' right to use their property, he said.



Incoming Mayor Ben Marks (left) presents a proclamation to outgoing mayor Joe Alkateeb at the city council's Jan. 5 meeting.

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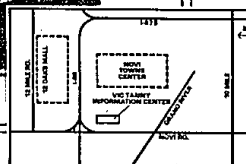
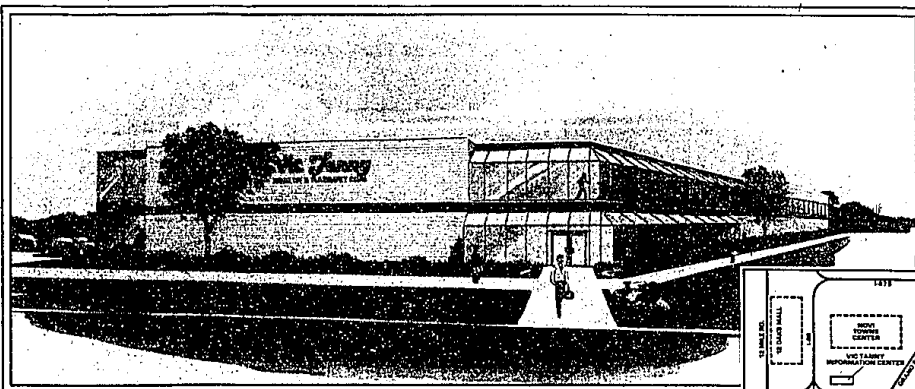
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