

# City: no to bid to leave DDA area

A property owner's request to be removed from Farmington's Downtown Development Authority district was denied Monday by city council.

Thomas DeWard's letter requesting removal of his building at 33004 Grand River was the first negative statement to be made on the record about the DDA and the city's push toward a downtown rejuvenation. The council's denial vote was unanimous and followed a recommendation made by city administrators.

In a second motion, the council voted to return to the planning commission the matter of rezoning DeWard's property from residential to R10, one family office, so it would conform to the city's master plan.

DeWard was not present at the meeting. The building in question is on the north side of Grand River west of Farmington Road.

DeWard's written request to the council followed his request to the board of zoning appeals to use the property as a bakery outlet and a petition to the planning commission to have the property rezoned for central business district use.

Both requests were denied, according to information from the city.

**THE BUILDING**, with a non-conforming use, is serviced by a very narrow street and has restricted parking, causing a limited number of prospective tenants, according to city manager Robert Deadman. He said removal from

**'... these factors have little to do with whether... the property is included within the... district.'**  
— Robert Deadman, Farmington city manager

the DDA district should not be an issue.

"It is clear that Mr. DeWard wants the unrestricted use of his building as a commercial building," Deadman said. "However, it has been recognized... that this building has limitations because of its size, location, available parking and ingress problems."

"All of these factors have little to do with whether or not the property is included within the downtown development district."

No specific improvements are scheduled in front of DeWard's building, prompting his request to be removed from the DDA district, Deadman said. Property owners in that district will pay a special 2-mill tax as part of the project.

"The purpose of the DDA is to develop a program to improve the entire district," Deadman added. "Whether a tree, lamp post or other improvement is actually located in front of a particular building will have little to do with the ultimate long-term success of the downtown."



Workers clean debris from the old machine shop building in preparation for the renovation for Focal Point Studio.

RANDY BORST/staff photographer

## Focal Point transforms former machine shop

Continued from Page 3

**THE JAKACKIS** began looking at the building last May, doing research and eventually signing a purchase agreement last October. They have been before the Farmington Planning Commission and recently received approval on their financing. Michele has worked closely with

hometown architect Kirk Yuhasz who has worked to create the close-knit atmosphere the couple craves with the needed versatility for their photography business. Michele's father, a builder, along with her photography expertise gave her the eye she needed to help plan the building.

In the photography business "we're always soliciting the smile —

getting the expression," Jerry said. The key is to keep clients calm and comfortable, because they always want to look their best, he added. "We want people not to feel nervous. They should be unpressured and untrussed."

The Jakackis don't expect the new location to increase their business dramatically.

"It's basically to make things more comfortable for what we have now — not to expand the business," Michele said.

Buying their own building is something that has been a long-term goal for the business, they said. They view the move with a sense of permanence and a sense of security for themselves and their employees.

The Focal Point began in 1973 in a 400-square-foot room in the Village Mall downtown, eventually expanding to a 700-square-foot office in 1976. They moved to their present location in 1978.

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