

# Office building dropped from proposal

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the action, suggesting that the proposed amendment be sent back to the planning commission for review. Though Alkatishev said he supported the Sisters' plans, he was uncertain whether a special zoning district was required. Councilman Donn Wolf was absent.

**OTHER COUNCIL** members overwhelmingly supported the Sisters' plans for elderly housing, elderly care and a nursing home. "I can see the utilization of elderly housing on that site. I think they have tremendous facilities there."

Mayor Ben Marks supported the Sisters' plan, but suggested that the proposed text amendment should be sent back to planning commissioners for review. Councilman Terry Sever agreed. But both voted to introduce the amendment after the rest of council considered planning commission review unnecessary.

The change in Mercy plans most likely will affect the location and size of the Sisters' other proposed buildings, such as elderly cluster housing, congregate housing, nursing

home and support services — bank and barber, for example, said Norman Hyman, the Sisters' attorney. "The Sisters want to do what is right for this community consistent with their needs," Hyman said. "We have concluded the Sisters of Mercy will look elsewhere for administrative offices for their health care corporation."

"THERE WOULD undoubtedly be some shuffling of the buildings. I would suspect there would be some room for additional housing," Hyman continued, adding that it's too early to determine. While the number of residents — mostly from Lincolnshire, Farm Meadows and Kimberly subdivisions — was far less than the attendance the planning commission's discussion of the Mercy plans, many were just as vocal.

The Sisters' decision to drop plans for the office center, which would have housed and centralized the Mercy health care services, made some residents happier, but nonetheless concerned about increased development near their neighborhoods. Traffic and, to a lesser degree, sewers continued to bother residents. But residents also seized the opportunity to chide the Sisters for "competing with private enterprise" in offering elderly services and housing.

"I don't know how the city allows them to get away with it," said

Bruce Doolittle, a Farm Meadows Homeowners Association trustee. And yet another resident added: "As we all know, they (Sisters) contribute no property tax to our city, yet they receive the same benefits."

**FINALLY, MARKS** insisted that residents address the land use issue rather than criticizing the Sisters. Despite continued complaints that more development on the Mercy complex will add to an already congested road network, council members supported a traffic analysis that showed the increase in traffic flow would be less than if single-family houses were built on the complex. Kimberly subdivision resident Aldo Vagomez supported the Sisters' contention that traffic will be no worse with their proposed development.

"I don't see Mercy at the present time contributing to the major traffic problem," he said. The majority of traffic along 11 Mile in particular is from office buildings in Southfield, he said.

"The only time traffic and sewer problems are raised is when Mercy tries to do something," Vagomez said, adding residents didn't object when apartments in the 11 Mile-Middlebelt area were built.

Other residents told the council they felt it was unfair that the 11 Mile-Middlebelt area was becoming a center for elderly housing. "We are not opposed to care for the elderly," said Margaret Ross McKay, president of the Lincolnshire Homeowners Association. "We feel there is a high concentration of congregate care in this small area," she said, referring to nearby

elderly projects, such as American House.

**THOUGH THE SISTERS** — based on residents' complaints — agreed to drop plans for the proposed office center, residents continued to oppose development on the site. A resident representing Lincolnshire East Homeowners told council that in a recent poll, 84 percent opposed the Sisters' plan as originally proposed and 57 percent opposed plans even without the office center.

Doolittle complained about the closeness of the proposed elderly cluster housing to the Farm Meadows subdivision. "I didn't buy my house to look at 150 feet of attached cluster housing," he said.

Another area resident, Vicki Barnett, told the council that though she was prepared to oppose the Sisters' plans, she is now confident — with the deletion of the office center — that the area will remain residential. But she questioned the necessity of changing the land use district.

The Sisters' plans for the complex — elderly housing, congregate care, nursing home and support services — can be accomplished by rezoning the acreage to RCE, a special existing zone for elderly services, attorney Hyman said.

"We concluded that in order to give the public greater control . . . we would ask for something different than RCE. We tried here to anticipate the concerns of the public," Hyman said, adding the Sisters' nonetheless would accept the RCE zone.

Claude Coates told the council that the SP-5 amendment will provide a lower building density than RCE would. The setbacks in both zones would be the same. SP-5 also provides for stricter control and review by the planning commission than is available under RCE. A public hearing, for example, is required when the Sisters' functional land use plan — showing land use areas proposed, size and location on the site and relationship to adjacent land — is up for approval, Coates said.

Planning commissioner Jeri Van Houten told the council that she would like to see some of the standards, such as setbacks and density, readdressed. With the elderly housing at a proposed 195 units and more than 100 beds in the nursing home,

the development will be large, she said.


Some residents expressed concern that by amending the city's zoning ordinances to include SP-5, the district could be used in other areas in the city. Coates and Hyman confirmed that the district could be used elsewhere. But Coates said that in reality, a large site is needed to accommodate development included in the SP-5 zone.

Council suggested including a minimum acreage in the proposed text amendment to ensure that the SP-5 zone is not attempted on small parcels of land. After discussing the Mercy plans for the last two years, Coates responded, "I don't think it (land size) was much of an issue (for planners)."

## Council appoints board members

Farmington Hills Mayor Ben Marks has made the following appointments and reappointments to some of the city's boards and commissions:

- Farmington Area Commission on Aging: Three-year terms, expiring Feb. 1, 1990, for James McDonald, Kathleen Nylén, Sister Margaret Weber, Gloria Traite.
- Farmington Area Arts Commission: Three-year terms, expiring Feb. 1, 1990, for Robert Benjamin and Beverly Ellis.
- Farmington Hills Beautification Commission: Two-year terms, expiring Feb. 1, 1989, for Eileen Abbott, Fred Harrison, Elsie McKown, Nancy Passfield, One-year terms, expiring Feb. 1, 1989, for Martha Chalfant and Sherry Weber.
- Farmington Hills Historic District Commission: Three-year terms, expiring Feb. 1, 1990, for Ruth Moehlman and Joan Barber.
- Farmington Hills Parks and Recreation Commission: Three-year terms, expiring Feb. 1, 1990, for John Bailey, Sandra Donlon, Mary Foran, Barbara McCann, Michael Horner.



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