

# DDA votes against shopping center

## Livonia plan would hurt downtown

By Casey Hane  
staff writer

A proposed Livonia shopping center could hinder efforts to rejuvenate Farmington's nearby downtown area, a Farmington board has decided.

Members of the Farmington Downtown Development Authority board voted unanimously Tuesday to support a Livonia Planning Commission denial for a 118,000-square-foot shopping center proposed for the southwest corner of Eight Mile and Farmington roads.

The project is proposed by Nelson-Ross Companies of Farmington Hills.

"That kind of development, nearly on the border of the downtown, could have an adverse impact," said DDA member and Farmington city manager Robert Deadman. "We're trying to preserve a historic downtown."

The project site sits less than two miles from downtown Farmington. Eight Mile Road divides the city of Livonia from the cities of Farmington and Farmington Hills, and also divides Wayne and Oakland counties.

Nelson-Ross needs approval from the city of Livonia because the proposed center is more than 30,000 square feet.

THE LIVONIA City Council voted in early February to send the matter to committee for further study following a public hearing. According to a spokeswoman from the Livonia council office, the matter will again

be discussed at a March council meeting, although no firm date has been scheduled.

Nelson-Ross' plans were halted last December, when planning commissioners voted to deny the project. The developer appealed to the city council, which held its public hearing Feb. 1.

In denying the project, Livonia planning commissioners said traffic and storm drainage problems along Eight Mile needed to be solved before a shopping center is built.

Farmington DDA members say they would rather it not be built at all.

They are concerned because of the site's proximity to the downtown, which will undergo a major \$1.4 million renovation project slated to begin this spring.

Deadman said he would attempt to meet with Livonia city officials to voice support for the DDA stance. The DDA will also send a letter to

Livonia explaining its position.

LIVONIA PLANNING commissioners denied the proposed project, even though Nelson-Ross officials said they were prepared to help pay for road improvements in the area.

"We agreed to do the engineering to widen the road from Gill Road to Farmington," Nelson-Ross president David Nelson told the Livonia council in February. "The (county) agreed to provide a traffic light for Eight Mile and Gill. The county is also committed to get the funds for the improvements. This indicates how far we have gone to correct the issues."

According to Livonia officials, the planning commission did not know of the planned road improvements when it denied the project.

Staff writer Marie Chestney contributed to this report.



## Teddy bear rally

Farmington Public Schools' Larkshire Elementary capped a teddy bear rally with an all-school parade Feb. 26. The parade included Parkey the Panda Bear, alias Dave Justus of the Farmington Hills Parks and Recreation Division. From left are Larkshire second graders Dawn Rammage, Jeff Rothenberg, Tim Fox and Diana Paric and their bears.

In February, students wrote stories about bears, read all kinds of bear books, worked on art projects with bear themes, wrote reports about bears and shared their bears with others.

# Sex education more visible in schools

Kara Kurtz is a Farmington High School freshman.

By Kara Kurtz  
special writer

"It is becoming more important each year to have a sex-ed program at the high schools," says Estralee Michaelson, sexual education instructor in Farmington Public Schools.

Michaelson reports that with 1.5 million teens ages 15-19 getting pregnant each year, 2.4 million teens contracting sexually transmitted

diseases and AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) now beginning to filter into the teen population, it is vital that teenagers be educated on these issues.

The goal of the program that Michaelson and her associate, Kathleen McElroy, teach is to help kids understand the term "sexuality" and give them factual information so they won't hurt themselves or others.

Michaelson has noticed a change in parent's views of the program; all material is available for parental viewing by state law. While in the

past, some parents thought ninth graders were not ready yet for such an extensive program, lately their attitude has been one of "frenzied support, with no hesitations. They want us to tell it all."

MICHAELSON FEELS the AIDS epidemic has contributed to the changing of such opinions. Says Michaelson, "AIDS is helping to increase everyone's awareness of the importance to talk about sex."

She thinks AIDS is also causing more parents to begin educating their children at home on important

sexual matters.

Michaelson feels that supplying kids who are debating having sexual relationships with factual information will help them to make their decisions less spontaneously.

Although it is impossible to gauge what has been accomplished during the course because no testing is allowed and no records may be kept, Michaelson feels there is a lot of listening going on.

"It's hard to get kids to talk about the program because of peer pressure from other classmates."

Michaelson does feel that the program is too short. If more time were allotted for the course, there would be more time to deal with issues and more time between speakers and films for discussion.

Michaelson feels good about what she's doing.

## Tax forum aids seniors

April 15 seems to creep up on us every year. This time, seniors can attend Botsford General Hospital's monthly luncheon and be prepared for it.

"Taxes — The Law and You" will be discussed at the next Table Topics Club luncheon. The program begins at noon, Friday, March 11, in the Administrative Building at Botsford, 28050 Grand River.

Tax-related questions and concerns will be addressed by Tom O'Connor, a corporate attorney from Botsford's law firm, Zweig & Lane P.C. of Southfield.

"The new tax laws have everyone confused — even more so than usual," says O'Connor. "I hope to clear up questions on tax shelters, investments and other topics of interest to seniors."

The Table Topics Club is a community outreach program sponsored by Botsford General Hospital. It demonstrates the hospital's continuing interest in the community by offering timely information to senior citizens.

The luncheon is open to the public for a \$3 pre-registration fee. Call before March 7 as seating is limited. Transportation is available for \$1. Reservations can be made by calling Botsford General Hospital, 471-8709.

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