

Historic house may greet visitors again

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

After a rocky start, Farmington Hills' Parks and Recreation Commission and Historic District Commission have cleared the first hurdle in sealing the fate of the historic Eleanor Spicer estate house.

"I think the controversies between the historic district commission and parks and recreation are resolved," said Paul Blizman, historic district commission chairman.

Action came less than two months after the Farmington Hills City Council sparked controversy by asking the historic district com-

mission to help the parks and recreation commission determine the house's fate.

Some parks and recreation commissioners felt brushed aside, assuming the Spicer house was part of their balliwick to develop plans and programs for the city's parks.

In recent weeks, both commissions approved the concept of a more than \$300,000 three-year plan to restore and transform the estate house into a visitors center for Heritage Park on Farmington Road, between 10 and 11 Mile.

"Basically, they were in agreement that this was a good start," said Dan Potter, Farmington Hills

special services director.

THE PROPOSED three-year program is tentatively scheduled for city council review March 14. The city council apparently will make a final decision on what is to be done with the house and how much money should be spent.

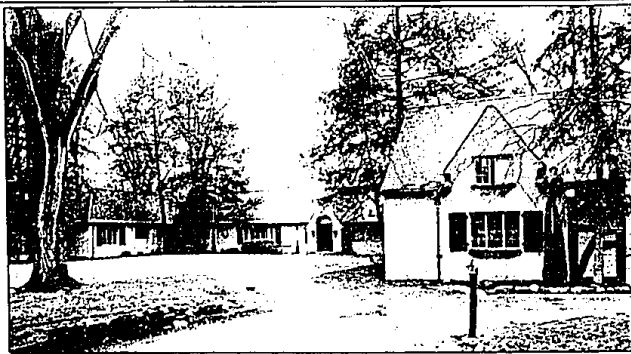
Both commissions went a step further. The historic district commission will recommend placing the estate house in the city's protected historic district.

"I don't know if the parks and recreation commission will agree with that recommendation," Blizman said.

Putting the estate house in the historic district commission should have an effect on the proposed restoration and visitors center plans.

"Our concern is with the exterior and some parts of the interior that we think are historically significant. I think it will be a gem," Blizman said.

The parks and recreation commission directed restoration architect Mike Kirk of Kirk & Koskela Architects, Detroit, to develop preliminary plans of what a new build-



RANDY BORST/AT&T photographer

The 62-year-old Eleanor Spicer estate house district, according to a recommendation by the Farmington Hills Historic District Commission.

ing of comparable size would cost the city.

"If we had that, we can say to the council, this is the comparison," said John Bailey, parks and recreation commission vice chairman.

Building a new facility for the special services department, including parks and recreation, is not a new idea. It was first discussed at

a joint meeting of the parks and recreation commission and city council in December.

THE THREE-YEAR restoration program makes good on a promise the parks and recreation commission made by memo to the city council in January.

The memo was presented when the city council requested the his-

toric district commission to develop its own ideas on possible uses of the house and whether the house should be placed in the historic district.

In the memo, the parks and recreation commission spelled out their intentions to develop plans, including a budget, for a visitors center, to stabilize the house and site work.

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—Paul Blizman
historic district
commission chairman

Renovation program to preserve old Spicer house

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

A proposed three-year renovation program will transform the 62-year-old Eleanor Spicer estate house into a visitors center for Farmington Hills' Heritage Park.

Under the plan, developed by architect Mike Kirk of Kirk & Koskela Architects, Detroit, the estimated \$277,400 improvements would begin this year and run through 1990.

"We feel very comfortable in the recommendation we're making now that we can have a functioning, restored building to serve the public and the park," said Dan Potter, Farmington Hills special services director.

The three-year program also

would ensure the preservation of the historic house, particularly if the house is placed in the city's protected historic district.

Using the estate house as a visitors center was chosen after the parks and recreation commission struck down plans to use the facility as administrative offices. "Costs just drove it out of sight," parks and recreation commission chairman Dennis Fitzgerald said in December.

Special services staff drew up a list showing how a visitors center could be used in the park on Farmington Road, between 10 and 11 Mile.

OF PRIMARY importance to the parks and recreation commis-

sion is the visitors center for recreational programming, such as nature study, day camps, cross-country ski center, hay rides and a fall festival.

Second in priority is the use of a visitors center for exhibits. Suggested exhibits include a photo display of the park's four seasons, Indian trails in the Farmington area and nature displays.

Next in priority is using the center for city and community functions. Parks and recreation, beautification, arts and historical commissions could have their meetings in the center, Potter said.

Community functions might include using the house as a parks information center and by various community groups for meetings

and functions.

Under Kirk's restoration plans, the most money, an estimated \$220,000 of the total \$277,400, would be spent in the third year. At first, city officials were uncertain whether revenue from the five-year, 0.5-mill parks levy could be used for the house.

But Potter said it appears the parks money may be used for the house. "The city was consistent with its promotion of the millage in the restoration of the Spicer house," he said.

The city council, however, will make a final decision on how improvements would be financed.

IN THE first year of the plan, the house's exterior will be im-

proved to stabilize the structure. Improvements will be made to the stucco, shutters, gutters, woodwork and the roof. Total cost of improvements in the first year, including electrical and site work, comes to about \$71,800.

"These items will deteriorate further if they are not addressed," Potter said.

Interior improvements in the house's south wing, where the bedrooms are, will be addressed in the second year. Work also will continue on the exterior. Total estimated costs for the second year are \$85,600.

In the second year, transforming the house to a visitors center will begin by converting the bedrooms and bathrooms to an office and

large open area. "We will open the majority of that wing for an interpretive area," Potter said.

In the third and most expensive year of the program, the rest of the house will be addressed. For example, the library will be converted to a conference room, the living and dining rooms to reception areas, and the kitchen and pantry areas to public restrooms.

TO ENSURE that the historic significance of the house, designed by Michigan architect Marcus Burrows, is maintained, any existing chandeliers or tile work will be used in restoration. For example, a built-in wooden refrigerator is expected to be saved and used, Potter said.

Grant would let library patrons tap resources of University of Michigan

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

Imagine tapping into a plethora of information available in the hallowed stacks and files of the University of Michigan Library.

Farmington area library patrons might have that chance if the Farmington Community Library becomes one of five to seven library systems in the state expected to benefit from a \$555,000 Kellogg Foundation grant.

"I think we stand a reasonable chance because no one is doing what we're doing for the business community," said Beverly Papai, Farmington Community Library director.

The library's application to participate in the five-year pilot program has received the blessings of the Farmington and Farmington Hills city councils and the Farmington-Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce.

With the Kellogg grant, the U-M library would create a remote information network called M-LINK. A part of the grant also will be used to convert the U-M library's card catalog system for computerized database use of more than 2 million records in the Michigan Research Library Network.

Successful library applicants will be able to tap into these resources by computer. "We hope that through these public libraries we can provide support to chambers of commerce, local school boards, economic development corporations, small businesses, professional groups, as well as individuals," said Richard Dougherty, university library direc-

tor.

WITH THE program, local patrons would have access to the university library's six million volumes, for example. "These items for the most part are ones you wouldn't find in a traditional library," Papai said.

The program will go a long way in meeting the public's "increasing demand for popular issues and other information like science, engineering, robotics."

In addition to providing access to the university library's more than 2 million bibliographic records, library applicants would receive:

- microcomputer hardware, software and telecommunications;
- a capability for electronic mail and conferencing with U-M library staff;
- database search services (over the computer) for U-M's computerized resources; and
- a delivery of books, journals and other requested materials over telefacsimile equipment that would be installed in the local libraries.

"The cost is direct cost at least in the first five years," Papai said. It's reasonable, however, to expect costs for some staff time with the pilot program, she added.

UNDER THE pilot program, local library patrons who plan to do business, for example, in another country would be put in touch with personnel at the university library who are fluent in a particular language as well as in trade and financial information, Dougherty said.

The Farmington library system will be competing with other library

systems in the Detroit area. Those expected to apply for the program are Canton, Southfield, Rochester Hills and Bloomfield Hills.

Criteria the library systems will be judged on include current local resources, library size and community type, economic development needs of the community, types of educational support and local library services.

Papai said she believes the Farmington library system has a fighting chance even though there have been reports that U-M library officials would like to use the program in out-state areas rather than urban southeast Michigan.

"I think we make an excellent case," Papai said.

The library system ranks first in the Wayne-Oakland Library Federation in the greatest circulation in the last few years. In 1986-87, both the Farmington and Farmington Hills branch had a materials circulation total of 555,439.

IN THE past year, the library's reference services increased 18 percent. Of the 850-1,000 database (computerized) searches for information, half came from the business community, Papai said.

What also speaks well of the library's chances is Farmington and Farmington Hills as a center for business and as the headquarters for many major corporations, she continued.

"We have tried to market our services for business," Papai said.

U.S. health theme of hearing

As the year 2000 approaches and new health concerns surface, the medical profession is preparing national objectives for disease prevention and health promotion in the next century.

Margo Gorchow, a registered nurse and executive director of Botsford General Hospital's Health Development Network in Farmington Hills, will give testimony on risk reduction issues, such as stress management and smoking cessation, at regional hearings of the U.S. Public Health Service and the Institute of Medicine Thursday and Friday at Wayne State University.

The hearings are designed to help

'This is an opportunity to influence the country's directions for health care.'

—Margo Gorchow

develop a framework for cooperation and action by the health care groups that will play important roles in improving the nation's health in the year 2000.

Regional hearings are a vital part of defining national health objectives," Gorchow said. "This is an opportunity to influence the country's directions for health care."

The Troy resident developed Botsford's stress management and other programs. She has been involved in all phases of community and work-site health education, with extensive class time, course development and research. She also has experience in adolescent psychiatry.

The two-day hearings are held every 10 years and are supervised by seven PHS and IOM officials from across the country.

Gorchow's participation is part of Botsford General Hospital's continuing effort to promote and encourage individuals and families to take responsibility for their own health and well-being.

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