

Projecting signs allowed downtown

By Casey Hane
staff writer

Although Farmington Mayor Richard Tupper favors a new signage plan for the city's downtown, he said he doesn't like the route the city has taken to approve it.

Projecting signs made of iron and redwood, describing downtown businesses to pedestrians using a graphic symbol, will be allowed under a variance to the city's sign ordinance approved Oct. 3. Tupper voted against it but said he agrees with the concept — just not the variance.

Instead of a special exception for those in the Central Business District, he would like to see the ordinance changed to allow the signs. Known for his concern over signage throughout the city, Tupper believes such a large variance would, in essence, be changing the ordinance and making it tougher for city employees to enforce.

"We are saddling this community," he said. "The building department and everybody's going to throw their hands up. How the devil are they going to enforce it... when we have a multitude of variances in this community?"

"I think this should be granted under a permissible use."

BUT OTHER council members disagreed, and approved the variance on a 4-1 vote.

The new signage type was suggested by merchants on the north side of Grand River through the city's Downtown Development Authority, and is expected to enhance the pedestrian character of the

downtown — which the DDA is trying to promote.

An ice cream cone for an ice cream shop, a flower for a florist, and other identifying symbols would be used on the city's signs, which would protrude from the building over city sidewalks. The variance allows the projecting signs to hang over the city right-of-way, neither projecting signs nor right-of-way obstructions are allowed under the ordinance.

DDA executive director Wendy Strip Sittsamer said the board did not "intend to open a Pandora's Box of projecting signs downtown." "The idea is that each building would have its own unique sign," she explained. "No two would be the same."

INTERESTED merchants would order signs, estimated to cost about \$200 including installation, through the DDA, which will coordinate the look of the sign program.

"It's strictly decorative," Strip Sittsamer added. "The intent... is decorative, friendly and unique. Something that no other community has."

City attorney John Donohue, also a DDA board member, said he felt the city was correct in going the variance route. He said it would be difficult to write a sign ordinance according to style.

Councilman William Hartscock said he believes the approach is a positive one, even though it is being handled as a variance. "I think there are certain things as a governing body, you take the approach of exclusion, not inclusion," he said. "I think it's a positive statement."



DDA executive director Wendy Strip Sittsamer, with one of the new store identification signs proposed for use in the central business district.

RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Mistaken identity concerns specialist

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"very professional, very polite — the type of person that I would probably do business with."

DAVID IRA Brown learned about the 1985 murder case when a business associate called Sept. 28 and asked if he knew who was in jail on a murder charge.

"I just jokingly said, 'I don't know, your brother George?' and he said, 'Sit down.' He says, 'David Brown, owner of Data Recovery.' I said, 'What kind of joke is this?' He said, 'You remember — that guy out in California.'"

When David Ira Brown broke the news to his wife and business partner, Marilyn, 39, he said, "Guess who's arrested for murder?" When he told her who, she replied, joking: "What did he do, murder his wife?" Neither then knew about the murder charge.

The Orange County District Attorney's Office charged David Arnold Brown with conspiracy to murder and murder for financial gain — 3½ years after the slaying that was thought to have been solved. The defendant maintains he is innocent.

Three days after the arrest made the front page of the Bay City Times, David Ira Brown, in Bay City installing computer equipment for a client, was approached by a data entry worker he knew.

She wanted to ask a question no one else in the office had the nerve to ask. "She handed me the front page of the Bay City Times and I read the article that was headed something like, 'Teen takes blame for dad,' Brown recalled. "When I looked up, she said, 'We want to

know if you have anything to do with this.' I said, 'Obviously not. I'm sitting here and the paper says this gentleman is in jail.'"

DAVID ARNOLD Brown's teenage daughter, Cinnamon, was found hours after the March 19, 1985, slaying of 23-year-old Linda Marie Brown. Lying in a backyard doghouse, suffering from a drug overdose, Cinnamon was holding a note that read: "Dear God, please forgive me. I didn't mean to hurt her."

Cinnamon Brown confessed, was convicted and was sentenced to 27 years to life in prison. Because of her age, the sentence meant she would be held by the California Youth Authority until age 25 or until freed for good behavior.

After three years in custody, Cinnamon Brown, now 18, recently came forward, apparently implicating her father. The prosecution maintains that Brown persuaded his daughter to bear the murder rap.

The prosecution says David Arnold Brown has collected \$835,000 from \$1 million worth of life insurance policies he had taken out on his wife.

Meanwhile, David Ira Brown has considered changing the name of his company, which does \$600,000 to \$700,000 worth of business a year. But he decided to keep Data Recovery Inc. As he put it: "I've worked very hard for seven years to build a reputation for this company."

Brown has five employees — his wife of 17 years, his parents and his brother. The company will move to Farmington Hills within two months.

The Associated Press contributed to this story.

Kendallwood to undergo \$3 million remodeling

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have new tenants, particularly in light of expected rent increases because of the major renovation.

"OVERALL, WE'LL maintain the average number of spots, but they'll be shuffled a bit," Host said. Renovation has started and will

continue into next year.

Landscape is a primary ingredient of the renovation project. Landscaping will be a part of the improved sidewalks and will be accented along Farmington and 12 Mile, as well as along New Market behind the center.

"We will use a lot of color, a lot of sizes to bring landscaping in as a very important feature," Host said. The sidewalks will be improved and feature a textured design. The

parking lot, which generates a lot of residents' complaints, will be improved and a concrete wall in the lot will be removed.

The buildings will get face lifts with awnings and a type of stucco for texture. "We will attempt to blend it into the area," Host said.

A new 8,000-square-foot building facing 12 Mile and backing up to the National Bank of Detroit will boast new retail shops. The center's unflattering back on New Market also

will get a face lift. Dumpsters will be screened.

A former bank in the parking lot has been torn down.

More stores will be added near Perry's on the center's west side, facing Farmington Road. And Newport Construction is talking with Hardee's officials about revamping the restaurant's facade.

League drops support

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Bloomfield League of Women Voters.

"It makes you wonder how much manipulating went on in the first one (debate)."

The attempt to orchestrate the debate defeats both the league's desire for a spontaneous exchange of ideas and threatens the organization's reputation for being non-partisan, added DePoorter.

"If they tie our hands, if we can't sponsor debates that are unbiased

and non-partisan, then our reputation is on the line," she said.

"Our debates are not canned. Sure, topics come up for which the candidates may have a speech ready. But possibly other topics come up for which no speech is ready. Candidates can't dictate what is asked and what isn't."

BECAUSE THE candidates aren't allowed to call the shots, the League is the best organization to sponsor the debate," said Karen Fabian, president of the League of Women Voters of Troy.

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