

points of view

Cities have developed their own styles

IT'S AMAZING at times how our memories operate, and how far back we can remember.

Some things leave indelible impressions on us, while other things fade into a hazy batch of years we call the past. Many things belong in the past, especially if we want to look to a productive future.

Two old issues were raised last week during a planning commission hearing in Farmington Hills, pitting at least two residents, appointed planning commissioners of that former township, against the smaller and older city of Farmington.

Understandably, there were some

trying times in the Farmington area in the late 1960s and early 1970s, as residents of the township attempted consolidation, which failed because Farmington residents didn't want it.

Then Farmington began annexing parts of the township, which Hills residents said forced them to become a city. They voted on the issue in 1972 and the city charter was adopted in 1973.

Of course there were hard feelings, and anger. Many people still believe the Farmington area would better serve residents as one city.

REACTION TO these issues being



Casey Hans

raised again last week was mainly one of surprise. "I'm surprised that's still an issue," said one official who has worked with both cities over the years.

Perhaps that's because the cities have developed a good, working relationship. Since before the 1970s,

the communities have come together in many ways for the benefit of all residents. Many don't even realize there are two different cities.

They share a community library system, a district court, an arts commission, and a love of historical elements in both communities through the Farmington Historical Society. A citizens group is currently studying the feasibility of opening a senior center for residents of both cities. There is a mutual aid pact for fire and police protection, although the departments are separate. They also share the common name

of "Farmington."

IT'S TIME for this anger to subside, as we continue to develop better communities for both the old timers and the many new residents who know nothing of consolidation attempts and land annexations.

That era is over.

It's time to put it in a drawer, close it and lock it away forever.

Over the years, each community has developed its own unique personality that would be lost if these two cities were one. Farmington still has that small-town atmosphere, quiet pace and residents with a hometown

outlook. Farmington Hills has a more upscale, urbanized atmosphere, where residents live at a quick pace.

Farmington is comfortable and predictable; Farmington Hills is exciting and new. Both are qualities that make them unique and different — and separate cities.

But although they remain independent, a marriage of sorts is a necessity, for better or worse. They need to share where they can for the betterment of all.

Casey Hans is a staff writer for the Farmington Observer.

Literary freedoms on trial Freeway stirs mixed signals

'The condition upon which God hath given liberty to man is eternal vigilance; which condition if he breaks, servitude is at once the consequence of his crime and the punishment of his guilt.'
—John Curran, Irish patriot



Steve Barnaby

JUST IMAGINE, you and your local newspaper could be threatened with extinction for running an unpopular letter-to-the-editor — perhaps authored by you.

Your right to participate in shaping and molding your own community could be threatened.

Sounded like an impossible notion last week. Not so far-fetched this week.

Take a close look at recent developments in the suburbs. There is more to fear than a Middle East holy man.

Today, a Southfield school library lays in charred ruins, the victim of vandalism.

Our right of access to free expression has been damaged.

Today, books in the Plymouth/Canton school district are under attack, victim to a campaign which claims to be fighting Satanism.

OUR GUARANTEE of free speech is under attack.

Today, book stores in suburban malls are caving in to the threats of

a foreign power by removing an author's work from the shelves.

Our freedom to know is being held hostage by literary terrorism.

Today, far too many in the educational, literary and journalistic communities are afraid to speak out.

Our free voice in a democratic society is in danger of being hushed.

Historians will have a tough time finding examples of courage under fire during this period. We truly are acting less than admirably. How we handle this censorship-through-terror will set a precedent for how we will live in the future.

Whether it be the result of complacency, negligence, fear, suppression or vandalism, one thing is for sure, our children's chances of enjoying the same liberties as we do have diminished considerably in the last weeks.

PERHAPS AMERICA, shrouded

In all its wealth and power is becoming lazy in its middle age. Some of these actions say that freedom, after all, isn't that important, just so the good times keep rolling along.

The refrains of a rapidly melting resolve ring all too loud. "So what if books are burned?" "Who cares if our educational system is crippled?"

"Why take a chance on a book about a culture we don't understand, anyway?" "Why bother?"

Notice, the vandals at Southfield High went for the "heart of the school" as one teacher called it. They hit the library, not the cafeteria, not the gym. They went for the books to wreak their vengeance.

Now volume after volume is destroyed. And even if one student misses the experience of finding a book which will spawn a new idea, we all lose.

The Plymouth/Canton campaign is nothing short of domestic literary terrorism. The logic seems to be, ban the books and you've banned Satan.

Hogwash.

We should be appalled, outraged and ready to fight back. Yet the candle lighting the eternal vigil of freedom flickers in the harsh wind.

Steve Barnaby is managing editor of the 12 Observer & Eccentric Newspapers.

FOR BETTER or worse, freeways define much of who we are and what we do. Like it or not, the last great freeway in Michigan is nearing completion.

The last link of I-696 across the northern suburbs should be completed this year. The saga of I-696 lasts longer than an NBC mini-series. In fact, when work first started on the expressway, there was no such thing as a mini-series.

For a quarter of a century, struggles over rights-of-way have prevented the completion of the last link of a Detroit freeway belt.

The delay is so long that unusual things have happened. Cracks were discovered last week in a bridge that will carry the freeway over the Rouge River in Southfield. The bridge cracked before the freeway was open to traffic, which is not so unusual as far as cracked bridges go. But the bridge was 23 years old. It's been sitting unused since the mid '60s waiting for expressway construction to get out of the slow lane.

During this time, east-west traffic across Oakland County has become a long-standing joke. Not everyone finds this offensive. There are communities along I-696 where traffic lights purposely work against the driver. The message is simple. If you are in a hurry, try another route.

THERE WILL BE a faster way to



Rich Perlberg

cut across the county once I-696 is opened this fall. Planners say you will be able to go from Novi to St. Clair Shores in 30 minutes, which is probably worth doing once just to say you did it.

Many people are licking their chops over the possibilities. A national real estate consulting firm hired by Oakland County sees "dynamic" market possibilities for communities that straddle the highway.

Upscale condominiums, high-tech industrial space, and neighborhood and strip retail centers will be strong, according to the firm, Laven-thol and Horwath.

The easier access isn't the only reason for the outlook. Many outlying communities such as West Bloomfield, Rochester Hills and Troy are looking askance at uncontrolled growth. Their reluctance to cooperate with future projects may turn southward the gaze of some developers.

You don't have to look far to see how an expressway can change an

area. Development along I-275 continues to change the scenery almost daily. There is a difference. Most of I-275 used to be nothing but open field. The area along I-696 is a "mature" area, as a county press release delicately puts it. It will have to be redeveloped.

NOT EVERYONE is thrilled with the expressway. Some fear they will be left behind; others fear an increase in crime; some worry that the freeway will become a concrete barrier between the suburbs and Detroit; still others, in communities such as Lathrup Village, worry about the proliferation of billboards.

But for many the future is optimistic. Rebirth towns like Royal Oak think the expressway will add to their renaissance. A city like Southfield, where commercial development is already flourishing, sees the highway as an added impetus to promote a good residential community.

"The completed I-696 will give people more choices of where to live, shop, work and play," said Robert Block, city manager in Southfield and chair of the I-696 Committee.

"As traffic barriers are lowered, real estate competition will increase."

Rich Perlberg is the assistant managing editor in charge of Oakland County editions of the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers.

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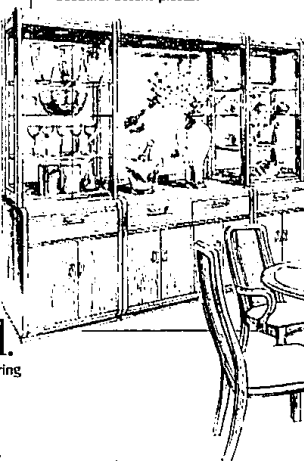


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