

# Toxic waste — Real threat or 'paranoia'?

By Susan Buck  
staff writer

Legitimate concern or paranoia?  
A joint city council-planning commission meeting called to discuss use of toxic or hazardous materials as well as industrial-office-research (IRO) zoning in Farmington Hills drew intense response from participants.

About 80-90 new businesses would locate within an IRO district in the city if the council approves rezoning 14.5 acres immediately south of Hillside Condominiums, north of Indoplex Circle, in the Drake-Grand River area, from office service (OS-1) to industrial research (IRO).

Some residents fear a toxic threat to their neighborhood. But the developer contends the city has sufficient controls to regulate the kinds of businesses that might locate there.

"I don't think that we have to succumb to a paranoia that everything that goes into this city is going to have toxic waste," said councilman Ben Marks at the Sept. 14 meeting. "I have so much faith in the planning commission that they are going to have the ability to police it."

Marks called the groundswell of some nearby residents' opposition to the rezoning hysteria.

"I am not convinced that this is not the right use for that piece of property," he said. "Rather than have people look at a 30- or 25-foot office building with lights on all day, they will something substantially less."

Councilman Aldo Vagnozzi countered Marks' term of paranoia. "I did not run into any area of paranoia. I would not put them (residents) down on the basis that they were paranoid because I don't think they are. I hate to have it go down that these were highly emotional residents and that they were paranoid."

"IT'S UNREALISTIC to think the planning commission is going to monitor what happens in an IRO district," said Paul Blizman, planning commissioner. "We're not going to do that. We're going to ask questions

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— Councilman Ben Marks

when people come to the board. We're going to ask them questions about what they are going to do in the facility and we're going to accept what they tell us. Who's going to monitor it?

"It's not going to be members of the planning commission. It's not going to be members of the city council. It's going to be the staff. Is there adequate staff to do it? If there isn't, then it's up to the council to appropriate the money to hire the staff."

Greg Kocab, Independence Commons subdivision board member, took issue with Marks' hysteria statement, citing a potential impact on real estate valuation. He invited Charles Salyer, an Independence Hills subdivision resident and mortgage banker with Fannie Mae, to attend the meeting. "I believe that it (IRO) would impact property values," Salyer said. "I have not heard anybody address secondary marketing values."

Said Geri VanHouten, a planning commissioner, to Kocab: "Didn't you hear any of the discussion that says that those businesses do not automatically go in there? If it is harmful, as you fear it is, the planning commission would not allow it to go into operation there. You have every safeguard in the world."

KOCAB QUESTIONED what happens, for example, when a chemical laboratory changes types of contract work.

Ed Gardiner, of the Farmington Hills community development department, said other types of approval in other uses allow for annual special approval with input from the fire marshal, who notes any change in the business. Information is transmitted to the planning department for review by the planning commission.

"There are some safeguards (in the ordinance) and we could speak to that issue. There are use approvals that can be guaranteed to be reviewed," said Gardiner.

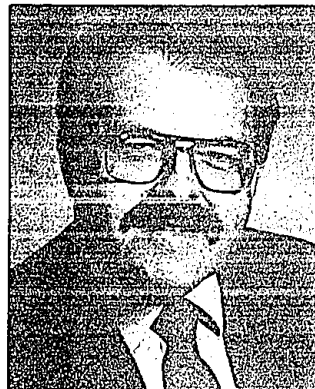
According to Brenda Kant, an Independence Hills resident, biotech waste is not viewed as a product of the industry and is not subject to regulation concerning deliberate release nor is it considered hazardous waste, which is covered under such laws as the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act. Kant said there is no way for the city to know of a contract change in an IRO district unless there would be an accident.

"We can't assume that only harmless companies will move into an IRO area," said Kant. "The public can't see a microbe. They aren't going to have a good idea about what is being released (into the environment)."

"Mr. Soverby (councilman Paul Soverby) asked what don't we like about IRO? My answer is: basic research, experimental laboratories, pharmaceutical laboratories, pharmaceutical manufacturing, experimental medical laboratories and motels and hotels. I would ask that you repeal the IRO amendment and take out experimental research for the whole community of Farmington Hills."

HILLSIDE ESTATES board members, meanwhile, are satisfied a 1988 IRO ordinance amendment allowing city planners to review proposed uses, hold a public hearing and impose special conditions will keep out toxic chemicals or waste and safeguard all citizens in the area.

"Our leases don't allow toxics," said Melvin Kaftan, owner-developer of the 14.5 acres on Drake in question. "Deed restrictions are tough to change. Chemical uses and pharmaceutical, that's not our interest."



**"It's unrealistic to think the planning commission is going to monitor what happens in an IRO district,"** said Paul Blizman, planning commissioner

"I think this ordinance does give the planning commission the ability to see what is going on. I can't understand people a half mile, a quarter mile away, talking about (home) values. The toxic issue is a citywide issue. I don't see why it is an issue just for my piece."

## New committee probes toxicity concerns

By Susan Buck  
staff writer

A technical committee is now operating to fill the information and technical gap regarding citywide problems in dealing with toxic and hazardous materials.

Spearheaded by Farmington Hills city councilman Philip Arnold, the ad hoc committee on toxic/hazardous materials is expected to supplement the expertise of city administrators, council members and members of boards and commissions on a continuing basis.

Arnold stressed that the recent controversy concerning a proposed industrial-research-office (IRO) rezoning on Drake Road was merely a conduit for forming the committee.

The city council formed the committee on Aug. 14, in the wake of a request to rezone 14.5 acres on the east side of Drake, north of Grand River, from office service to IRO.

"The acreage is near a condominium complex and two residential subdivisions. Some residents fear a toxic threat to their neighborhood. But the developer contends the city has sufficient controls to regulate the kinds of businesses that might locate there."

The city council's next vote on the

IRO rezoning proposal is scheduled for Monday, Sept. 25.

THE COMMITTEE will look at the big picture regarding chemicals and their problems. "It's a citywide committee that is divorced from the IRO issue," said Arnold. "You won't see anything out of that committee for the next two months."

"Local communities haven't addressed this issue (of toxic materials)," he said.

The committee will evaluate present city policies regarding the types of materials permitted, existing controls and the necessity for more limitations or controls.

At a joint city council-planning commission meeting Sept. 7, city manager William Costick and Arnold, who will serve as council liaison, appointed seven individuals with technical/environmental backgrounds to serve on the committee.

They are:

- James Schierloh, director of marketing and sales, Enovetech, Inc., a company that operates chemical treatment facilities and landfills dealing with hazardous waste and nonhazardous chemicals. He was a firefighter and training officer from 1971-78 for the Trenton, Pa., Fire Department and was a firefighter and district chief for the Farmington Hills Fire Department from 1978 until recently retiring.

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- Richard Lipka, manager of the plant and environmental engineering department, casting division, Ford Motor Co. He has 30 years' experience with air/water pollution abatement, hazardous materials disposal and industrial hygiene.

- James Hutchens has been employed by Giffels, a major engineering firm, Southfield, for 12 years. He is a registered professional engineer working as a mechanical project group leader. Past projects include industrial construction design and air quality management, the latter in coordination with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. He is a member of the Air Waste Management Association, dealing with air pollution control and hazardous materials handling and disposal.
- Dr. John Anderson is co-founder and medical director of the Suburban Medical Center of Farmington Hills/Livonia. He specializes in occupational medicine and is involved with the industrial community in Farmington Hills. He is enrolled in a Masters of Public Health program through the medical college of the University of Wisconsin.
- Thomas Rancour, manager of

Allied Signal, Inc., health and safety for the automotive sector, and has been involved in fields of health, safety and industrial hygiene for 10 years. He is trained and supervised industrial health and safety programs with Allied Signal and the Bendix Corp.

- Gregg Knepley is vice president of planning and marketing for Providence Hospital, Southfield. He worked in the health care field for the past five years. Before, that he worked two years in the chemical industry including five years with the B.F. Goodrich Co. dealing with specialty chemicals.

- Neil Lurie has owned and operated Silvercraft Inc. his own electroplating company for 23 years and is

familiar with toxic/hazardous chemicals and handling difficulty.

ALSO ON the ad hoc committee are Steve Hume, Farmington Hills fire marshal, and Larry Lichtman and Don Millington, planning commissioners.

A 1988 amendment to the IRO zoning text allows the planning commission to review land uses, hold a public hearing and impose special conditions (such as greater buffers, height restrictions and land use controls) to assure a use is not injurious to health and environment.

The city's master land use plan was developed in 1978 with arcas (IROs), said Claudio Coates, planning consultant. "The intent of the (IRO)

is to provide a good tax base," Coates said. That's why churches, warehousing and wholesale facilities are not permitted, he said.

The ad hoc committee meets again at 6 p.m. Oct. 2, city manager's lower conference room in the city hall, 31555 11 Mile.

"We're trying to get a handle on the laws out there," said Fire Chief Richard Marinucci of Farmington Hills. "There's not a lot of local laws per se."

Marinucci views the fire department's role as a resource as well as a regulating and controlling agency that will enforce storage use, production and transportation. Transportation of chemicals is the greatest threat, he said.

## Fisher Center seeks to open resale shop

By Susan Buck  
staff writer

St. Vincent & Sarah Fisher Center in Farmington Hills has applied for a zoning use variance that would allow use of part of an existing laundry as a resale shop.

John Buehner, support services director for the residential treatment program for abused, neglected or emotionally disturbed children, sent a May 9 letter to Paul Blizman, Farmington Hills chief zoning enforcement officer, enclosing a map and blueprint of the proposed area.

Woodcreek Civic Association board members will meet with center representatives Sept. 21. The variance request goes before the Board of Zoning Appeals Oct. 3, postponed from Aug. 15.

"We feel the resale shop would be a benefit to the community," wrote Buehner.

"There are poor and disadvantaged people who live in the communities surrounding the center. The resale shop would provide these people with a place where they could purchase clothing, furniture, household items, etc., at a reasonable and affordable price."

"The resale shop would also be a further extension of the Daughters of Charity mission to minister to the poor."

BUT TWO Woodcreek residents, William Ellmann of Weymouth and Rick Herman of Harwich, are concerned about the plan.

"They're going to put in a Salvation Army-like store," said William Ellmann, a 40-year subdivision resident and an attorney. "We want to keep things status quo."

"Both men worry about what they call increasing commercialization along Inkster, south of Northwestern Highway. "It's not part of the city's master plan," said Herman, an accountant.

Added Ellmann: "It could be the effective end of residential zoning."

Ellmann believes the use variance would affect the city's legal battle with Southfield-based Providence Hospital.

Hospital officials are fighting the city council's February refusal to rezone 18.5 acres of a 21.5-acre site southwest of Inkster and Northwestern Highway for a 20,000-square-foot office building-outpatient clinic.

"This new development envisions a variance in the residential zoning which, if granted, could raise chaos in the pending lawsuit and would break the united front that Farmington Hills advocates," said Ellmann in an Aug. 26 press release.

"It would be a commercial use in a residential area and could have far-reaching consequences as to the re-

zoning of all properties, a proposition that the city is already avidly defending in the circuit court against Providence."

IN A June 30 legal complaint, Providence Hospital asked for more than \$10,000 in damages for being denied its request to rezone the acreage from single-family residential to office use.

Paul Blizman, Farmington Hills city attorney, declined comment. "I don't want to bias any discussion by the zoning board of appeals. That (discussion) should be done at the public hearing."

Woodcreek Civic Association board members continue to discuss the proposed resale shop. "We need more information on details, looks and what they'll get from it," said Hank Murawski, of Village, in his second year as association president.

The association counts 80 percent membership in a subdivision of 320 homes.

St. Vincent & Sarah Fisher Center already operates the Caboose Craft shop, which sells craft items in a re-modeled caboose.

"It (the resale shop) is not going to be a big money-maker," said Jackie Kelsey, community relations spokeswoman for the center.

"There are a great many people who bring donations to the center. We really can't use all of them. There are people in Farmington and Farmington Hills who are in need."

THREE TIMES a week, the center's surplus is picked up by St. Vincent de Paul, a charitable organization.

"We have heard from some residents. That's why we're setting up the meeting, to listen to their concerns," Kelsey said. "We did go to the zoning board Aug. 15 to ask for a variance. There were some people there from Woodcreek who asked us to postpone our request until we had time to discuss their concerns."

The resale shop would be open Wednesday through Saturday, six hours a day, using the existing Inkster parking lot. The center also plans to expand its Inkster parking lot before opening the shop.

The new parking area will accommodate 21 more cars. More parking is available throughout the center. Kelsey sees no problems in accommodating employee and resale shop parking.

The center plans to advertise the resale shop with a large sign on the three-car garage facility adjacent to the laundry. The sign will face Inkster.

Advertisements also will be placed in local church bulletins on a regular basis as well as periodically in local newspapers.

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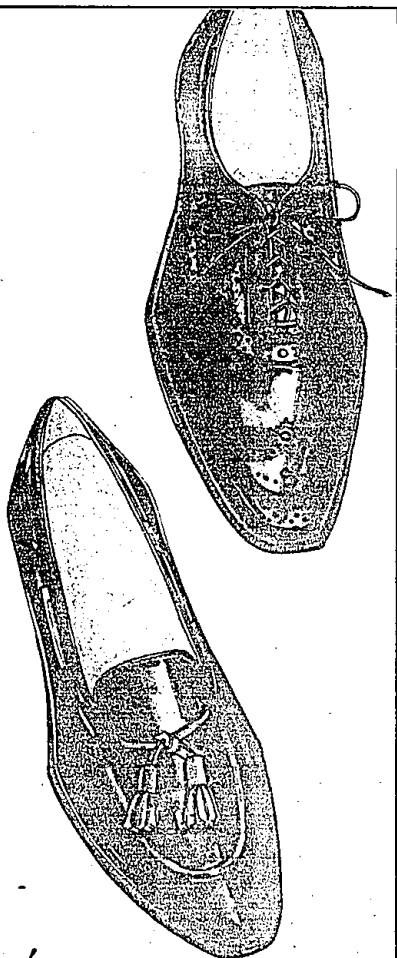
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