

Rezoning bid across from city hall denied

By Bob Sklar
staff writer

Despite her claim she can't sell her land as zoned, the Farmington Hills City Council denied Mary Hurd's request to rezone two acres on 11 Mile, across from city hall, from residential to office.

Denial came in a 6-0 vote Nov. 20 after a public hearing. It upheld a unanimous planning commission recommendation that maintained the rezoning would conflict with the master land use plan and be a form of spot zoning.

Neighbors objected to rezoning the land — north of 11 Mile, just west of Orchard Lake Road — from one-family residential to office service.

Councilman Ben Marks abstained from the vote because he

owns the office building on the northwest corner of 11 Mile and Orchard Lake Road.

The office building, in a residential zone, was the result of an Oakland County Circuit Court consent judgment. "I don't want it to sound like sour grapes however I vote," Marks said.

Hurd, who now lives on Lyncroft, bought the two acres in 1978.

Trying to paint the area as non-residential, she cited Marks' office buildings on the northwest and southeast corners, his vacant parcel planned for office use on the northeast corner and the civic center site across 11 Mile.

"I maintain a distinctly commercial environment has developed around my property," Hurd told the city council.

HURD ARGUED her land provides a buffer between Pasadena Park subdivision north of 11 Mile and the civic center site south of 11 Mile, and thus is more suitable for transition zoning like office.

With rezoning, she said, she would provide a buffer zone between the rezoned land and the neighboring subdivision.

She said she has tried to sell her land for four years, at prices ranging from \$129,000 for just the house to \$159,000 for all of the acreage. The land, including the 80-year-old farmhouse, is appraised at \$217,000.

Hurd's real estate agent, Sandra Murphy of Pavillon Design and Building, in West Bloomfield, disagreed that rezoning would cause a domino effect on 11 Mile — master planned for residential

use except at two intersections.

Murphy said she has written opinions from 11 developers who say the "highest and best use" for the Hurd property is commercial.

She said Gerald Goehring, of Attorney's Appraisal Service in one of Marks' office buildings, provided an appraisal and affidavit reaffirming the developers' view.

MURPHY BELIEVES the city council shouldn't have let councilman Marks abstain.

"He has firsthand knowledge of the area," she said, noting the planned office use for his property on the northeast corner of 11 Mile and Orchard Lake Road also resulted from a consent judgment.

Claude Coates, city planning consultant, told the council the civic center site, which includes the city

hall and police department and which could include other municipal uses, is a permitted use in a residential zone.

He discounted Murphy's contention that builders would realize a profit only if they built inexpensive cluster housing on Hurd's land. "Price is reflective of an area, not a single parcel," he said.

Ann Lynch spoke on behalf of the Pasadena Park Homeowners Association and nearly 100 petitioners who opposed the rezoning. She said there's no evidence Hurd's land can't be used for residential purposes.

"It's really stretching it to say this intersection has a distinctly commercial environment," she said.

She said Farmington Hills has enough vacant office space to meet future office demands.

'I maintain a distinctly commercial environment has developed around my property.'

— Mary Hurd
property owner

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Fund established in girl's memory

A memorial fund has been set up to cover funeral expenses and other family needs following the death of 9-year-old Monica Findlay.

The Farmington Hills girl died soon after climbing from the Farmington Area YMCA pool and collapsing during a sleepover for 32 first through fifth graders Nov. 18.

Monica Findlay's cause of death still had not been determined as of Friday, the Oakland County Medical Examiner said.

Farmington Hills police called her death accidental, pending an autopsy.

Our Shepherd Lutheran Church, the family church, is overseeing the memorial fund.

Send contributions, payable to the church in Monica Findlay's memory,

Chamber planning holiday events

The Farmington-Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce will host two holiday get-togethers in December.

The annual holiday mixer will be 6-8 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 12, at Jack Cauley Chevrolet, 7020 Orchard Lake Road, West Bloomfield.

Participating chambers include Farmington-Farmington Hills, Lakes Area, Novi and West Bloomfield. Admission is one toy for the Toys for Tots program adopted by Jack Cauley Chevrolet. Bring your business cards.

The annual holiday luncheon will be at noon Friday, Dec. 15, at the

Post Office expands window service

Farmington postmaster Kenneth Harris announced expanded window service hours for both the Farmington and Farmington Hills post offices for the Christmas period.

On Saturdays, Dec. 2, 9, 16, the service windows will be open from 8:30 a.m. until 1 p.m. instead of the normal 9 a.m. to noon hours.

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