

# Downtown facelift

## Farmington's DDA continues revitalization program

By Casey Hans  
staff writer

Farmington's Downtown Development Authority board plans to pay special attention to buildings that need sprucing up, aiding in the overall effort of the ongoing downtown revitalization program.

"I think we should continue to be concerned about (building) design," DDA member and Farmington city manager Robert Deadman said. "Maybe our role is to identify buildings, and help the owner to make a decision about what needs work."

"We've got some fresh new shopping centers on our borders," he added, referring to competing centers in Farmington Hills and Livonia. "We need to find out what's happening with our buildings."

DDA president Harry Wingerter said he would consider forming a

**'Maybe our role is to identify buildings, and help the owner to make a decision about what needs work.'**

— Robert Deadman  
DDA member

standing subcommittee in February to study building design and renovation.

DDA executive director Wendy Strip Sittsamer and city planner Christopher Waczny were also directed to study about and report on Design Michigan, an advisory program that analyzes a community's design needs and suggests a plan of action for a fee.

REACTION TO the Design Michigan program was mixed. But discussion about it brought out DDA members' concerns about the future of downtown buildings and how changes could impact the city's image.

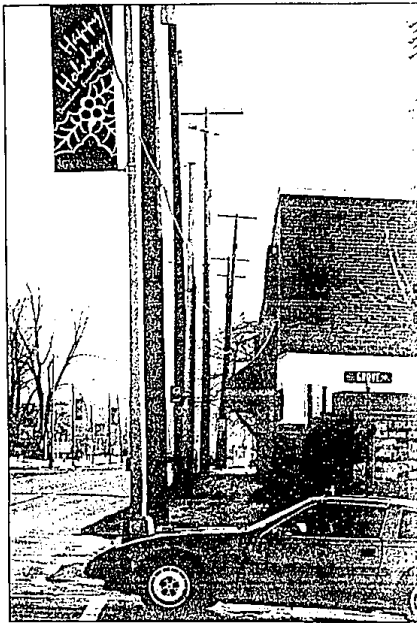
The DDA was formed in 1986 to begin a financial, physical renovation of the downtown area, and to help preserve its image as a hometown community. Since pedestrian

lighting, tree plantings and new sidewalk installation, several major private projects and renovations have also occurred in the downtown area.

Buildings like the one at the corner of Farmington Road and Grand River, recently renovated, work being done on the former Enterprise/Jerry's Bookstore building on Farmington Road, and a group of houses along Grand River being renovated for businesses are just a few examples of work, which has snowballed throughout the city's central business district.

"There's some spotted interest," said Strip Sittsamer. "So far, we've been very lucky in seeing some quality jobs."

The DDA is taking a special interest in building design because of concern that not all renovation projects may turn out as well in the future.



Sprucing the sidewalk on the south side of Grand River, near Grove Street, is a target of Phase III of the Downtown Development Authority's revitalization plan.

## Builder to plan aesthetics with DDA

By Casey Hans  
staff writer

Developers of a planned downtown condominium project plan to coordinate landscaping and pedestrian lighting with the current Downtown Development Authority streetscape project.

The 18-unit, three-story building planned by the Rickard Group will be built behind the Downtown Farmington Center on Orchard Street, with occupancy planned for next fall.

Developer Charles Rickard told the DDA board Jan. 3 that he wanted to coordinate exterior lighting and landscaping with the DDA's ongoing rejuvenation project.

"I'm at a point now where I can work a lot of things into this," Rickard said. "I like what you people have done. I'm very flexible on this."

Other private downtown developers have been able to receive favorable pricing on the same lighting fixtures by ordering from the same vendor as the DDA, allowing them to coordinate their exterior look with the DDA plan.

Construction on the development on the condominiums is expected to begin sometime in the next two weeks, Rickard said, requiring the demolition of two houses near the corner of Grove and Orchard streets.

Rickard said seven people had already shown an interest in the development, which will offer

one covered parking space per unit, fireplaces and other amenities.

THE FACE of Orchard Street — formerly a row of residential houses — has changed during the past year. This condominium development is just a part of the change.

The city of Farmington swapped land with Equitable Management Co., which built new retail space on a city parking lot at the corner of Orchard Street and Farmington Road, then demolished several houses to develop parking along the rear of the shopping center.

Also, last week, the DDA board made an offer to buy the remaining house on Orchard Street for a future development use, yet to be determined.

## Greenery to highlight next phase of streetscape plan

By Casey Hans  
staff writer

Softening cement areas by planting grass and trees, and upgrading the eastern entrance to downtown Farmington, are planned during the third phase of the Farmington Downtown Development Authority's streetscape project.

Especially targeted will be an area just east of Grove Street, where a long expanse

of building and sidewalk — along the old Federal's building — has no greenery.

"We're trying to maintain a 'heavy walk' idea," especially along the north side of the street, said city planner Christopher Waczny, who presented the conceptual plan at a recent DDA meeting.

This phase was changed to target an area of Grand River from Grove Street east to Mayfair Street because of an upcoming sewer project.

It will complete improvements to the Grand River corridor. Bid specifications are expected to be approved next month, with work scheduled for this spring and summer.

PLANS CALL for planting smaller trees with guards — similar to what has been installed to date in other areas of downtown — installing pedestrian lighting, maintaining many large trees, and adding a green belt with large trees along the side of the old Federal's building.

There, four feet of the 10-foot sidewalk would be removed closest to the road, and a green belt of grass planted in with groupings of large trees whose branches would be above the stores' display windows.

Although DDA members raised concerns about the green belt, citing possible problems with salt and snow in the wintertime and heat in the summertime, Waczny said he recommended that as the best course of action.

"It's a problem area, but I hate to leave things as they are over there," he said. "It's a tough area, no doubt about it. The other alternative is to leave it. I don't want to do that."

The four-foot green belt would serve as a buffer against nearby Grand River traffic, several DDA members said.

"If you get a row of trees, it's going to give people a bit of protection — a row of safety," said DDA member Frank Clappison.

## Novi officials upset with ambulance response time

Fire officials in neighboring Novi are focusing on what they say are unacceptable response times from Community Emergency Medical Services, the ambulance company owned by Farmington Hills-based Botsford General Hospital.

"We've told them, 'Here's what we want and here's what we expect.' We're making sure they meet their commitment," explained Novi Fire Chief Arthur Lenaghan.

The department is monitoring CEMS response times, which averaged 7.53 minutes in Novi in 1989.

Novi uses guidelines established by the Michigan Department of Public Health, which require ambulances with advanced life support units to respond to calls within 10 minutes or less 90 percent of the time.

On an average, 13 percent of all responses exceeded 10 minutes between January and November, but one month ranged as high as 21 percent, according to CEMS records.

MEANWHILE, FARMINGTON Hills fire officials say similar response time problems with CEMS from last year were rectified after the company added a dedicated ambulance and medical team to the city.

"I know CEMS has problems in other communities, but we don't have any," said Hills Fire Chief Richard Marluucci.

The Hills brought their concerns to the forefront last March and April, citing similar concerns with response times and conflicts between personnel. Now, the CEMS teams have become part of the solution. "They're part of a team," Marluucci said. "We've even invited them to our drills."

But in Novi, "there's a definite geographic problem," especially at the city's north side, said CEMS president Greg Beauchemin. "That's not only this ambulance company, but for the (Novi) police department and fire department."

"We knew there was a problem and that we had an arduous time getting up there. It's not totally fixed. There are still speed bumps around the lake (Walled Lake) and we're still contending with those."

BEGINNING DEC. 1, Novi firefighters answering emergency calls were asked to fill out reports on the ambulance response times and whether a basic unit or an advanced life support unit responded to the call.

Beauchemin said he was unaware of the city's concerns until a letter was sent by the fire department last fall, and articles began appearing in the local newspaper. He said a plan of action to eliminate the problem was devised between CEMS and Novi officials and is nearly completed.

As an additional help, CEMS plans to implement a computerized dispatch system in mid-1990, allowing the company to monitor E-9-1-1 calls directly.

## School district reviewing its secondary programs

By Casey Hans  
staff writer

Farmington Public Schools is undergoing an extensive review of its secondary programs, leading to possible wide-ranging changes in the district's curriculum at the middle schools and senior highs.

A committee is working on gathering information from teachers, administrators and the community.

"So far, there have been five major areas which have surfaced" during the information-gathering process, explained assistant superintendent Judith White.

These included: scheduling options with possible flex scheduling; a comprehensive curriculum program for both middle school and high school students; better serving students at risk; reviewing the entire middle school concept; and reviewing high

school graduation requirements.

White stressed that doesn't mean these are the areas of focus; that will be determined next year. But many of the issues raised by the school board at its Jan. 9 meeting were on a similar track. Parents were given a chance to have their say at a Jan. 11 School/Community Forum meeting.

"All the issues you identified were the same issues teachers and administrators identified. That's good," committee member John Darrett, language arts coordinator for the district, told the board.

BOARD MEMBERS placed on the table a number of issues relating either to middle school, high school or both levels. Some were included in the list noted by White; others were new.

Here are some of the areas of concern of various trustees:

• Janice Rolnick — variable scheduling, foreign language programs.

• Helen Prutov — students at risk, overall middle school program.

• Jack Cotton — the issue of academic versus vocational classes.

• Jack Inch — introduce English translations of foreign books in the schools.

• James Abernethy — equal opportunities at all three high schools, including equal access to courses; strengthening of the performing arts; review of role of department chairs; transition from middle school to high school.


• Susan Rennels — closed high school campus, overall review of counseling departments.

White said the committee would take comments from everyone before narrowing the focus for the study.

### CIAO CLEARANCE

**\$138 - \$188**

■ We are clearing our entire stock of those wonderful wool knit Ciao dresses you love! Fully lined, hand-finished with quality workmanship throughout. Shown from the collection, raspberry or lilac swing skirt dress with removable turtle neck. 6-18, \$138. While Quantities Last.



Jacobson's

We welcome Jacobson's Charge and American Express! Shop until 9 p.m. on Thursday and Friday. Until 6 p.m. on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Saturday.