

Developer saw opportunity where cornfields grew

By Kevin Brown
Staff writer

When Robert DeMattia considered building his first industrial park near M-14 in Plymouth Township, the common wisdom said Oakland County was the better place to go.

"No one was here, it was just cornfields," said DeMattia, 45, a Farmington native who moved his headquarters from Southfield to Plymouth Township. "They thought everybody wanted to go in the northern corridor."

"I COULD SEE the area of M-14, I-275 and I-96, the proximity to Ann Arbor and Detroit, the proximity to the airport, a very stable local government. It's a great place to live," he said.

His developments have ranged from warehouses to buildings for laboratories where the temperature can't deviate more than half a degree amidst elaborate containment areas and filtering systems.

Since 1977, DeMattia has developed four industrial parks in the Plymouth Township M-14 corridor. And amid talk of an economic downturn in Michigan and the country — DeMattia said he noticed such a downturn in the first six months of the year — the area's premiere developer of industrial parks said further R.A. DeMattia Co. development in the township "could always be in the offing."

Public speculation on one development — a new stadium for the Detroit Tigers — suggests the team could favor a western Wayne County site for a new stadium — possibly Plymouth Township.

A possibly suitable area for a stadium is the site of the former St. John's Seminary, on 175 acres at Five Mile and Sheldon. The owner, the Archdiocese of Detroit, has signed an agreement to sell the property, but won't name the buyer.

DeMattia, noting that Tigers owner Tom Monaghan is active in the Catholic church, speculated that

Monaghan could be interested in the site. "I'm sure the owner of the Tigers doesn't have any ties to the Catholic Church," he said, adding a wry smile.

"I BELIEVE THAT a stadium should be downtown. It's a symbol of Detroit, it's a great place," DeMattia said.

If a stadium were to be built in the township, "There would be a lot of traffic," he said. He talked of a scenario of fans leaving such a stadium at rush hour after a day game, as employees leave the industrial parks he's built along the M-14 corridor. "I don't think that would be much fun."

On the walls of his office in the Metro West Industrial Park off of Sheldon north of M-14 are photos signed with greetings from Ronald Reagan, U.S. Rep. Carl Pursell and Vice President Dan Quayle. Asked if he favors Republican politicians over Democrats, DeMattia smiled, adding, "Anyone who's elected."

"I believe that business leaders

have to support and be activist in politics," DeMattia said. He's joined state government-organized trips to Japan to seek business for southeast Michigan, and is active with the state department of commerce.

"Detroit has to be strong for the suburbs," he said. Asked if he's considered industrial park developments in the city, DeMattia said he has, but declined to elaborate.

DeMattia, a married father of three grown daughters who lives in Northville, said he rises at 3:45 a.m. and works out for half an hour before leaving for work. He conducts two staff meetings per week at 6 a.m., works with sales staff and oversees a total staff of 75. He leaves the office around 7 p.m.

ASKED HOW HE'S successful at gaining clients for his developments, he declines to elaborate, saying only that the firm uses a broad marketing approach.

Over a 10-year period, DeMattia and two other developers plan a 930-acre development in Northville Township called Huntington Falls, to

include 1,200 housing units, a golf course and other recreation facilities.

"Our marketing studies show that people like to maximize their stay with their families," he said, and get from where they live to recreation sites with "minimal travel time."

While civic leaders in Livonia have lamented some businesses leaving their city for Plymouth Township — where tax breaks are offered to those businesses — DeMattia defends the practice as good for southeast Michigan.

"Tax abatement is offered nationwide, we're offering that to every foreigner that comes in — every domestic firm should have the same opportunity," he said.

"What we don't want is someone leaving Michigan," he said. "People don't move for tax breaks," he said. "It's a huge cost" for a firm to relocate.

"Sometimes we're very parochial," DeMattia said, suggesting that while a firm might relocate from Livonia to Plymouth Township, "They eat in the same restaurants."

DOES TALK OF a recession worry him? "For the last 14 years, I wake up every morning worrying about what the economy's going to do."

"Our clients find it harder to get money right now for lending," he said.

DeMattia said most of his area industrial parks are 90 percent occupied, which he suggests is an ideal rate, as some space is left for potential clients.

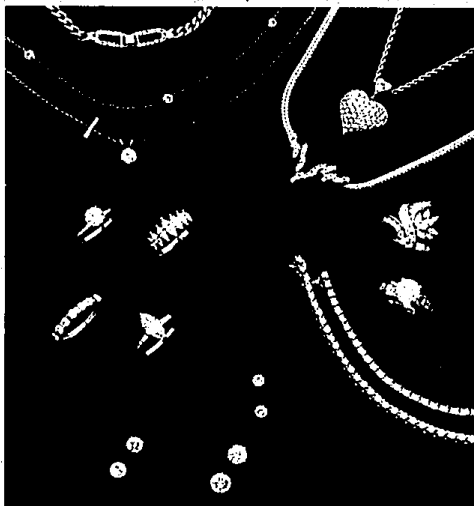
DeMattia said he's proud of the appearance of his industrial parks. "You don't see anything lying around, do you?" he asks, adding a staff person is responsible for maintaining that appearance.

Of the current troop deployment in the Middle East, which could have economic implications, DeMattia said, "I'm not saying we shouldn't be there."

But he recalls his service as an Army captain in Vietnam in 1969-70, saying, "To this day, I don't know what I was doing. I wasn't defending the United States."

Set the Night on Fire

Greenstone's creates the finest in elegant diamond jewelry, including a wide variety of custom settings in both gold and platinum. Pictured designs are priced from \$750.



GREENSTONE'S
CREATORS OF FINE JEWELRY

MONDAY THRU SATURDAY 9:30 TO 5:30 THURSDAY 10:30 TO 12:00
505 NORTH WOODWARD AVENUE, BIRMINGHAM, MICHIGAN 48209-1111 513/642-2000

HONEYBAKED
The original spiral-sliced ham... since 1957.



Savor the flavor
of a
HoneyBaked
holiday!

- fully cooked and ready to serve.
- hickory-smoked for gourmet flavor.
- hams always available.
- order ahead to guarantee specific size.

Serve The Traditional Holiday Ham!

Available Only At
These Nine
HoneyBaked Ham Co.
Store Locations
In Michigan

DETROIT
(313) 862-8622
ROSEVILLE
(313) 775-7900

TROY
(313) 689-4890
LIVONIA
(313) 525-2994

DEARBORN HEIGHTS
(313) 274-9600

TAYLOR
(313) 374-2600

BIRMINGHAM
(313) 540-0404

WEST BLOOMFIELD
(313) 851-2400

GRAND RAPIDS
(616) 957-3430

Extended Holiday Hours
Monday - Saturday
9-6

Open Sunday
Dec. 23rd

Ham 12-16 lbs. Whole ham 12-16 lbs. For and HoneyBaked brand hams are where in the continental U.S.A., call toll-free 1-800-962-HAMS. Shipping charges additional.

WE'VE GOT A GREAT GIFT IDEA FOR ALL THE GOLFERS ON YOUR CHRISTMAS LIST!



Gift Certificates to the 1991 U.S. Senior Open Championship at Oakland Hills Country Club, July 25-28. Order yours today!

Surprise all your golf-loving friends this holiday season with a truly unique gift... tickets to the 12th Senior Open Championship on Oakland Hills' famed South Course! Daily tickets are \$15 for practice rounds, \$25 for Championship days. What's more, you can enjoy extra savings on two ticket

packages by ordering in advance for next summer's premier golf event in Michigan. Mail your coupon today and a handsome gift certificate will be on its way to you well before Christmas... a one-of-a-kind "stocking stuffer," the perfect present for every golfer on your holiday gift list!

Description	Quantity	Price	Totals
DAILY TICKETS Specify number of tickets for each date, one parking coupon with each ticket purchase.			
Practice Rounds: Mon 7/27, Tue 7/28, Wed 7/29, Thu 7/30, Fri 7/31, Sat 8/1, Sun 8/2		\$15	
Championship Rounds: Mon 7/27, Tue 7/28, Wed 7/29, Thu 7/30, Fri 7/31, Sat 8/1, Sun 8/2		\$25	
“GROUNDS ONLY” SEASON TICKETS			
Includes seven daily tickets for 3 practice, 4 Championship rounds, daily parking coupons, copy of Championship magazine. Price rises to \$100 after 4/1/1991		\$90	
“CLUBHOUSE AND GROUNDS” SEASON TICKETS			
Includes ticket which is good for admission to Clubhouse and grounds for all days of Championship, daily parking coupons, copy of magazine. Price rises to \$150 after 4/1/1991		\$140	
“GROUNDS ONLY” EXCHANGEABLE COUPONS			
Good any day, includes 10 parking coupons, 10 Championship magazines		\$235	
“CLUBHOUSE AND GROUNDS” EXCHANGEABLE COUPONS			
Good any day, includes 10 parking coupons, 10 Championship magazines		\$345	
Postage and Handling		\$2.00	
TOTAL			

MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO: U.S. Senior Open Championship, Oakland Hills Country Club, P.O. Box 111, Birmingham, MI 48012 Phone (313) 645-1991

OR CHARGE TO: VISA MASTERCARD

Name _____ Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Card No _____ Exp Date _____ Date _____ Phone () _____ Signature _____

LET IT SNOW!

DON THOMAS SPORTHAUS—YOUR SPECIALTY SKI SHOP—IS READY FOR WINTER

WE'VE GOT THE HOTTEST NEW SKI EQUIPMENT AT THE LOWEST PRICES IN TOWN—GUARANTEED!



Holiday Hints from
Don Thomas Sporthaus

- Ski Videos starring Glen Plake
- Ski Boot Heaters by Hatriotics
- Car Racks by Thule & SAC
- Ski Bags, Bootbags & Fanny Packs
- Skis, Boots, Poles & Bindings
- Rollerblade In-Line Skates
- Parkas, Ski Pants & Sweaters
- Hats, Gloves, Socks & T-necks
- After Ski Boots for Adults & Juniors
- Ski Goggles & Sunglasses
- Ski Toes & Ski Locks
- Snowboards and Accessories
- Don Thomas Sporthaus Gift Certificate

As skiers ourselves, we offer the professional service you expect

Be sure your ski equipment is as ready for winter as you are—Don Thomas Sporthaus offers superb shop service including: Mounting, Engraving, Binding Checks, Stone Grinding, Sharpening, and Waxing!

Yours FREE with the purchase of a new pair of skis—THE DON THOMAS PROMISE—\$200 worth of complimentary ski tuning valid for five years!

Don Thomas Sporthaus

BLOOMFIELD PLAZA • TELEGRAPH AT MAPLE • BIRMINGHAM • 626-9500