

# Opinion

21898 Farmington Road/Farmington, MI 48336 Tom Baer editor/477-5450

016/FI O.G.E. Thursday, March 10, 1992

## Going Uptown Hills strip needs new ideas

**L**IKE A LOT of Detroit-area suburbs, Farmington Hills developed without the benefit of a central business district. Some folks are trying to change that; we hope they do.

Sure, you can point out that the city of Farmington — with its old-fashioned central business district — is kind of a hole of commerce in the surrounding doughnut known as Farmington Hills.

But, in reality, Farmington isn't Farmington Hills. The two places have separate and distinct personalities, even though they are united in many ways to form one community.

Farmington Hills has a lot going for it these days. It's become a hot location for corporate headquarters and many high-profile businesses. Farmington Hills also happens to be a pretty nice place to live.

Alas, there's no downtown Farmington Hills... no commercial and social heart, no common thread or unifying theme that you'll find in other towns with central business districts.

IT USED TO BE that city planners and merchants in these downtown-less towns would say "So what?" or "Big deal!" But as their towns became studded with ugly strip malls and clogged with horrible traffic, their attitudes changed.

Fortunately, attitudes are beginning to change in Farmington Hills these days with the formation of something called the Uptown Shopping District on Orchard Lake Road.

If Farmington Hills had a Main Street, it would be Orchard Lake Road. Ramrod straight and busy with traffic, the multi-lane highway has a good bit of the city's commerce clinging to its edges between 12 and 14 Mile roads.

Let's do something to improve the looks of some of the stores and the accessibility to the shopping centers along Orchard Lake, some merchants and city officials are pleading.

Let's have new facades, shopping banners, they say. And let's get the corridor more involved in community celebrations like the annual Founders Festival, maybe even stage a festival of our own.

## Act now Make assisted suicide illegal

**T**HE ARRANGED deaths of two women in an Oakland County park and the subsequent charges of open murder against Dr. Jack Kevorkian have brought the debate over the ethics and legality of assisted suicide back to the courts.

But Michigan legislators still have not passed legislation to address assisted suicide as separate from murder. And unless they do, the courts could be seeing a lot of Dr. Kevorkian or others who insist that assisted suicide should be legal.

The Legislature has come up with two bills that specifically address assisted suicide as a four-year felony, not murder. Legislators should adopt those bills into law, with a few changes, and soon.

THERE IS precedent for making assisted suicide a crime distinct from murder. Laws similar to bills working their way through both chambers in Lansing are already on the books in 22 states.

The proposed bills make it a felony punishable by up to four years in prison and a \$2,000 fine to intentionally provide the means by which another could commit or attempt to commit suicide. Anyone who knowingly or intentionally causes another to commit suicide, by force or duress, would be guilty of murder under the bills.

The major flaw of the bills is that they would consider withholding medical treatment under direction as assisting a suicide. That practice is currently allowed under right-to-die statutes and should not be changed.

An assisted suicide law should address the fundamental differences between murder and "mercy killings" while addressing the legitimacy of an individual's right to commit suicide if he or she so chooses.

SUICIDE IS not a crime in this country, but many other states have already recognized that bringing another person into the picture is dangerous because it forces that person to take responsibility for another's death.

There is a large body of psychological literature that suggests suicide assistance may well be a response to coercion and manipulation exerted by the suicide "victim" against the assistant.

A relative or friend of someone in great physical pain could be made to feel guilty or responsible for the plight of that person and be coerced into helping that person commit suicide.

The argument that a "qualified" assistant, such as a doctor, could make sure nothing goes wrong with a suicide has two flaws. It qualifies someone to validate a judgment that only the individual can make. And it presumes that with such an assistant the suicide could not be botched. There is no reason to believe an assisted

**Ramrod straight and busy with traffic, Orchard Lake Road has a good bit of the city's commerce clinging to its edges.**

In short, let's do something to get people to stop and shop and spend their money here. Otherwise, they'll speed away along busy Orchard Lake Road and do those things in some other city.

West Bloomfield, the next suburb north along Orchard Lake, looks mighty inviting with its trendy shops, local merchants admit.

THEIR CONCERNS and plans were detailed in a front-page story by Joanne Maliszewski in Monday's Observer.

Yes, we agree with most of what we've heard from merchants and, yes, like Ben Marks, a Farmington Hills city councilman who's spearheading the improvements.

Perhaps "Uptown" isn't the name for the Hills district. Remember, there's an Uptown shopping center to the south in Farmington and the last thing the Hills merchants need is confusion or legal problems.

But the name isn't the important thing here. What is important is that some people have banded together to solve a common problem. We hope they receive complete support of other business-oriented organizations — like the local chamber of commerce. Remember, the official name of the city's commerce clinging to its edges is the Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce.

No, Farmington Hills doesn't have a downtown. Those particular entities are kind of like silver dollars: They made just so many, and they're not making any more. If you have one, it's to be treasured.

But the Uptown Shopping District — or whatever they decide to call it — is still a great idea. We'll be watching as the plan develops.

**There is precedent for making assisted suicide a crime distinct from murder. Laws similar to bills working their way through both chambers in Lansing are already on the books in 22 states. The proposed bills make it a felony punishable by up to four years in prison and a \$2,000 fine to intentionally provide the means by which another could commit or attempt to commit suicide.**

suicide couldn't go wrong. If it did, the assistant might make sure the act is completed. That action would become something other than assisting a suicide.

LEGALIZING ASSISTED suicide would obscure the differences between murder and suicide. If there were only two people involved and one of them dies, there are no other witnesses and determining whether there was an assisted suicide or a murder would be next to impossible.

Opponents argue that such a law would punish someone, for instance, who intentionally leaves a bottle of sleeping pills out at a spouse's direction to make the suicide easier.

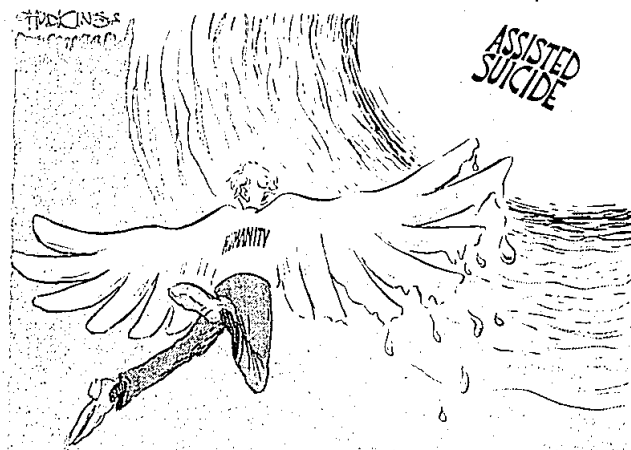
The law would make it up to a four-year crime. Circumstances, however, could warrant a lighter sentence.

The House is also considering a bill that would create a commission on suicide and one that would make assisted suicide legal. These would both do great harm.

CREATING A commission would only serve to put off a decision with no sure prospect that, after some length of time (the bill suggests two years), there would be some recommendation concerning the question. The Legislature has already wasted too much time and must address assisted suicide now.

The bill to legalize assisted suicide would have doctors determine the medical condition and life expectancy of someone asking to die. That is contrary to the position taken by the Michigan State Medical Society, which says "Physicians must not perform euthanasia or participate in assisted suicide."

The Legislature should pass a sensible law making assisted suicide illegal and do it soon. Otherwise, the state could become a mecca for anyone and everyone wanting help to commit suicide.



A Hot Issue

## Recession to change auto industry, labor

LAST WEEK I suggested the closure of Willow Run symbolized the fundamental changes now shaking the core of Michigan's political economy.

Aggravated by the recession, the basic changes now shaking the American auto industry will in time redefine the relationship between our state's two most powerful institutions: the Big Three and organized labor.

Because Michigan's economy is being transformed, so too will our politics.

GOV. JOHN Engler, Michigan's first radical governor since G. Mennen Williams, was elected in 1991. Engler argues that because our economic base is crumbling, Michigan is no longer a wealthy state with high personal incomes. The state cannot, therefore, afford to sustain its historic level of government activity at an overall tax burden that citizens are willing to accept.

The policies adopted by the Engler administration follow logically. Slash government programs to cut costs, especially now that the recession has cut income so drastically. Focus what government can spend on education in order to make Michigan more competitive at home and abroad. Cut taxes, especially those on real property, to improve the climate for business growth.

Informed by a conservative ideology that holds that government is always the problem and never a solution, Engler's prescription for a state turmoil is classic supply side politics.

**As part and parcel of the fundamental readjustment in Michigan's political economy, our current political system will have to change, too.**

FOR DEMOCRATS, the best news is Gov. Engler's policies are more popular than he is. Some are even beginning to realize that ceaselessly calling the governor "mean-spirited" does not itself constitute a credible policy alternative.

Beginning with State Rep. William Keith's underreported set of hearings on how to improve the skills levels of those who leave school and thereby Michigan's economic competitiveness, Democrats are developing an agenda built around the idea of "government as investor."

Instead of spending money solely on income supplements, insist that it be accompanied by job training. Instead of giving expensive real estate tax breaks to employers, find out what skills they need and get the K-12 system to provide them. In the words of a bishop friend of mine, "Instead of giving a hungry man a fish, give him a fishing rod and teach him to fish."

This process will take a while. If only because the components of the Democratic coalition are less coherent than the Republicans, and getting agreement from them takes time. But now there is some chance for a genuine policy debate by the time we elect a governor in 1994.



Philip Power

BOTH PARTIES, however, are going to have to realize that in politics, as in economics, it cannot be "business as usual." Current fear and loathing of the political system as it presently works is higher than I have ever seen it.

Most folks believe (correctly, in my view) that the political system is largely designed to serve the interests of a bunch of professional politicians, interested mainly in getting projected, bought and paid for by money from the special interest groups.

Speak to some thoughtful political insiders, people who have devoted years to public service, and you get the sense that they, too, agree. But they don't know how to change from inside the system that has sustained them for so long.

They'd better think fast. As part and parcel of the fundamental readjustment in Michigan's political economy, our current political system will have to change, too. Otherwise, the anger and alarm that so many people are now feeling will be expressed in extra political — and very dangerous — ways.

Philip Power is chairman of the company that owns this newspaper. His award-winning column appears periodically.

### from our readers

#### Edit was 'off base'

To the editor:  
Your March 12 lead editorial — "Speedy run" — is way off base. Speeding may not be the worst of offenses, but its potential is just as deadly as the other assorted crimes you list.

As far as I'm concerned, the police are too lax in enforcing the speed limits, especially in Farmington Hills on I-696. I drive the stretch from Orchard Lake Road west daily and I can't remember seeing a police car there at any time in the past year.

As I do the legal limit, I am left in the dust constantly, even by trucks. There is no rational basis for such excessive speeds, particularly in these heavily congested areas.

If you assume that one makes a 30-mile trip, the time difference between going 65 mph and 55 mph is about five minutes. If you go faster, the difference is even less.

THAT'S HANDILY worth the risk to self and more likely, others, if not direct bodily harm, then certainly in the amount of stress involved. So what's the rush?

There is something almost pathological that happens when a person

gets behind the wheel of our overpowered automobiles these days. All of a sudden, some of the meekness among us take on the air of a tyrant of the road.

As for "high-tech highways," you must be an arm chair general. With lanes merging from four to three to two and recombining from left or right or both directions all at once unexpectedly with little or no warning, one is in constant threat from speedsters.

In my judgment, few drivers are able to handle such poor conditions well, not even on a controlled race track.

What you should do is start a massive and continuous educational program in the press, teaching the public to drive intelligently and responsibly.

It certainly is more than being a lead-foot with a radar detector mounted on the dash and a car telephone in one hand careening down the expressway. Let's get serious about a serious problem.

Heary R. Grysb,  
Farmington Hills

Farmington Hills who complained about the obscenity being sold and rented at video stores, and also police Chief William Dwyer for his quick response to the situation.

Although not Farmington Hills residents, we face the same movies being sold and rented in Livonia. Today many video stores have "back rooms" or as Mr. Qasht put it "separate rooms" to house their obscenity.

One local video store owner recently told me he was thinking of selling lingerie in his backroom.

It is time to strengthen the obscenity laws here in Michigan. Then we need to enforce them, before the video establishments go too far selling and renting these obscene and pornographic movies.

Cheryl S. Walker,  
Livonia

### Opinions are to be shared

We welcome your ideas, as do your neighbors. That's why we offer this space on a weekly basis for opinions in your own words.

Letters should be mailed to: the editor, The Farmington Observer, 21898 Farmington Road, Farmington 48336.

### Let's crack down on porn

To the editor:  
I want to thank the citizens of

## Observer & Eccentric Newspapers

Steve Barnaby managing editor  
Susan Rosiek assistant managing editor  
Dick Isham general manager  
Mark Lewis director of advertising  
Fred Wright director of circulation

Suburban Communications Corp.  
Philip Power chairman of the board  
Richard Aglinin president