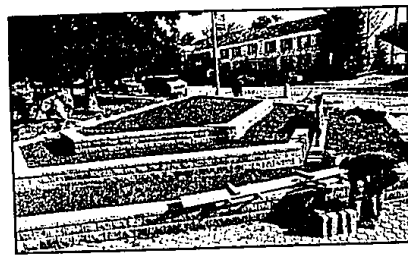


Brick by brick: Rock Smith of Westland lays a brick sidewalk around the planter at Farmington Road and Grand River.



Taking shape: The planter in downtown Farmington is being built by Margolis Nursery of Ypsilanti. According to foreman Ron Tooson, the firm also created the fountain for the Farmington Hills City Hall.

Corner planter curbs rumors

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

First of all, this is what's not being built on the northwest corner of Grand River and Farmington:

- A gushing fountain.
- A permanent spot for the Farmington sculpture, or,
- A platform for flying saucers to land to offer rides to Neptune during the upcoming Farmington Halloween Fest.

Bury those rumors. Other things are taking root at the corner in front of the historic Masonic Temple.

Construction is in full gear for the new downtown three-tiered planter. The spot that has been ripe for fertile imaginations will be the site of perennials and other aromatic occurrences.

Farmington assistant city manager Robert Schultz said he

hasn't heard the rumors, especially the believable one about a fountain.

"Not unless someone comes by and hits that fire hydrant on the corner," said Schultz. "It could then."

Schultz said the project is on schedule. Bids are out to select a gardener for the planting, which should be completed by the end of fall.

"It seems to be coming along reasonably well," Schultz said. "We've had reasonably good weather."

An artist's rendering of the plaza is on display in the lobby of city hall.

The beautification project includes new lamps, a sign and lighting as well as the three-tiered plaza. The cost of project is approximately \$60,000.

Council hopefuls cautious on DDA assessment plan

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

Farmington City Council candidates are treating a proposed special assessment on downtown commercial property with the caution they would a three-headed snake slithering on a patch of ice.

All agree the Downtown Development Authority needs to be funded. But how? That's the \$130,000 question.

The DDA stands to lose \$130,000 from its 1994-95 budget because of a decrease in tax increment finance revenue. That was a result of Senate Bill 1, which cut property tax for schools.

The DDA is looking at a special assessment on commercial property owners downtown through Public Act 120. The 9.5 mill as-



essment would be done by equalized valuation, roughly 50 percent of real property value.

Assessments and taxes are touchy subjects, especially around election time. For example, challenger Mary Bush was reluctant to comment.

"I don't want to make any comment publicly until I gather more information," Bush said.

Other candidates give the plan mixed reviews.

"I think we have to provide funding for the DDA," said Richard Tupper, who is running for a sixth term. "... but we ought to

investigate other avenues of revenue before we settle in and let merchants carry the freight."

Buyers thinks the proposed special assessment puts an unfair burden on downtown businesses. He thinks it should be shared by the rest of the city's businesses and residents.

Incumbent Arnold Campbell, on the other hand, sees the special assessment furthering the progress the DDA has made. He's seen it as a contingency plan, which will be adjusted if the state or schools decide to levy any new taxes.

"The hardest part is we don't know what Lansing is going to do," Campbell said.

DDA from page 1A

the next year. The DDA still receives \$74,000 annually in TIF money — a percentage off the top — through taxes levied by the city, Huron-Clinton Valley Authority and Oakland Community College. The authority also receives \$33,000 from a 2-mill tax already in place.

Ray said the 11.5 mills combined would put downtown businesses at a disadvantage.

"A lot of merchants downtown are having a difficult time," Ray said. "To put an additional noose around their necks is foolish."

The rest of the board members school support for the plan.

Board member Nadine Rafferty, who was absent from the meeting, submitted a letter of support on behalf of Kimco Realty Corp.,

owners of the Downtown Farmington Center.

Farmington city manager Frank Laubhoff said any additional revenue would be used to offset the assessment.

"It's still a net decrease," Laubhoff said. "The state hasn't decided anything yet regarding the proposed 16-mill business tax. There would still be a 9- to 10-mill decrease over what businesses are paying today."

The special assessment is allowed under Public Act 120, which lets cities establish principal shopping districts for the purposes of development and redevelopment. The act requires the special assessment money to be earmarked for a specific project.

The DDA said the \$650,000 raised over five years will be spent

this way annually:

- Administrative and marketing: \$63,000, for such things as salary, office rental, equipment, business recruitment, travel, workshops, facade lending and sign programs.
- Promotion: \$48,000, for continual and seasonal promotions geared to bring in new shoppers plus continued support for the present business base.
- Maintenance: \$20,000, for housekeeping chores in the downtown shopping area, including \$8,000 in expenses to cover such things as painting streetscape furniture, tree replacements and utility costs for lamps.

Birmingham has taken similar measures under Public Act 120. Southfield is considering it, according to DDA director Judy Downey.

'Swedes on Broadway' show scheduled

"Swedes On Broadway," a stage show staged by the Scandia and the Arpi choruses of the Swedish Club, will be presented at the Finnish Center, 35200 W. Eight

Mile Road, Farmington Hills, on Saturday, Oct. 23.

A show is scheduled for 1:30 p.m. Saturday for a \$7.50 dona-

tion that includes a dessert. A dinner show is planned for 6:30 p.m. for a \$17.50 donation. For reservations, call Lillian (656-8462) or Diana (761-4482).

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