

POINTS OF VIEW

Some areas are just perfect for development

The residents of Farmington Hills have recently been confronted with a loud and confusing debate concerning three proposed developments in our city: the Jones commercial/residential development at 12 Mile Road and Middlebelt, a Home Depot on the north side of Northwestern Highway east of 14 Mile Road and a Super Kmart shopping center on the south side of Northwestern Highway east of 14 Mile Road.

These are very serious issues that affect the quality of life in our community; debate and evaluation of each development proposal individually, on its own merits, are healthy.

Many opponents of these projects consider all development negative. This type of negative reaction is harmful to our city and can lead to disastrous results.

The opposition of West Bloomfield to the extension of Northwestern Highway in any form and the resulting traffic congestion at the intersection with Orchard Lake Road is a great example of the serious damage that can be done if development issues are not evaluated calmly on their individual merits.

I am a resident of the subdivision where the Kmart project is proposed. One important reason why the Kmart site is ideal for redevelopment is the lack of city water, sanitary sewers, proper storm sewers and paved roads in the area now.

Means improvements

Much of the site contains standing

water created by the overflow from sump pumps, septic tanks and the inadequate storm sewer system.

The proposed development would provide sanitary sewers, city water, paved roads and storm sewers at no cost to the city. Furthermore, the existing low-quality polluted wetlands would be re-engineered to create a high-quality wetlands, wooded and open area in a park setting.

This project would clean up an already polluted area and provide other city utilities and services. City officials have estimated that if every lot in our existing subdivision were developed, the cost of providing city water, sewer, storm water management and roads would approximately be \$16,000 per lot.

The money would come from special assessments against our subdivision. Since many of the lots are not developed, and there is no hope of that ever occurring, the actual cost to the existing residents of our subdivision would be greater.

Furthermore, these expenditures would not improve the value of our subdivision because it would still be an isolated island of low-quality housing surrounded by commercial development.

Traffic a concern

Perhaps the most serious concern to be considered with respect to the proposed Kmart project is the impact on traffic.

GUEST COLUMNIST



RICHARD ZERBO

The Aug. 11 Observer guest column by Andrew Nickelhoff suggests that the traffic study might be false because it was prepared at the developer's expense.

The developer paying for the traffic study is standard practice in our city and throughout the country. It certainly would not have been appropriate to have the city pay this cost.

In fact, city staff members set the parameters for the study and have stated they agree that the methodology used was correct.

The guidelines used in the study establish a "worst-case" scenario without the Hagerty Connector. This traffic study was performed by a reputable, independent traffic engineer, Michael Labadie of McNamee, Porter and Seely. I requested a copy of the study.

The actual findings are that the afternoon peak hour level of service as measured by delays at the three key intersections would change as follows: Orchard Lake and 14 Mile road from 59.2 seconds delay to 38.8 seconds, a 20.4 second improvement; Northwestern and 14 Mile Road from 62.3 seconds delay to 28.5 seconds, a 33.8 second improvement; Orchard Lake and Northwestern Highway from 17.5 seconds delay to 2.6 seconds, a 14.9 second increase in delay.

Clearly there are significant improvements at two intersections and the third would be an insignificant decrease.

Developer pays

Again, the cost of all road improvements needed to accomplish these gains would be paid entirely by the developer — not Farmington Hills taxpayers.

With recent changes in property tax laws in Michigan, it is very important to city taxpayers that a reasonable commercial property tax base be maintained.

At a recent Planning Commission hearing the city tax assessor stated that the percentage of commercial property in the city has been decreasing because most new development has been residential.

He also explained that under the new tax law, all property is first assessed at 6 mills. The next 18 mills is then assessed against commercial property.

Only if more revenue is still needed can additional mills be assessed against residential property. Therefore, it is essential to favor strong commercial assessments to avoid going back to residents for additional assessments beyond 6 mills.

Obviously, appropriate, well-planned commercial development in Farmington Hills will help to reduce all of our property tax bills.

When considering the various proposed developments in our city it is clearly in our interest to consider each one separately and demand that those who address the issues state specific facts and avoid generalizations that obscure the real advantages and disadvantages of the proposal.

The proposed Kmart center will be located in an area surrounded by office and retail projects and fits in well with these areas. Our homes do not.

While many areas of our city are not appropriate for commercial development, this location is ideal. Most importantly, it would solve the serious utility and infrastructure problem our subdivision now faces.

Please do not lump us in with the other projects proposed in Farmington Hills.

Richard Zerbo, a Chrysler Corp. employee, is married and has two children. He has lived in Farmington Hills 16 years.

LETTERS

No Interference

I am writing in regards to Senate Resolution 70 — a resolution to ratify the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child as a treaty.

While the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child promotes the human rights of a child, it also severely undermines the inherent rights and responsibilities of the parent, and compromises the sovereignty of the United States of America.

Article 13 limits parental rights and responsibilities in preventing a child's acquisition or other interaction with material deemed unacceptable. Article 14 grants the child the legal right to

object to any kind of religious training.

Article 16 reads, "State Parties shall respect the right of the child to freedom of association and to freedom of peaceful assembly" and eliminates parental rights and responsibilities of forbidding a child's association with objectionable companions.

In addition, an international treaty is supreme law and takes precedence over any contrary state or federal law — and is binding in all 50 states. Article 4 invalidates any federal or state law contrary to the provisions of the Convention.

It is time for all parents to notify their Senators (both Michigan senators are currently endorsing the ratification

of this treaty) and let them know that we will not allow the Federal government, and much less the United Nations, to interfere with our rights and responsibilities as parents.

You can call Sen. Levin at 1-202-224-6221 and Sen. Riegle at 1-202-224-4822.

Lynn L. Jahncke, Farmington Hills

No cooperation

As a full-time resident of Torch Lake, I take exception to the article written by Tim Richard on July 14.

Mr. Richard has drawn an incorrect

conclusion in laying the blame for controlling boats and lake usage on the local townships.

Townships do not "lack gumption" in passing ordinances to impose speed limits or shared-time rules. They lack money.

Here's the scenario. First the DNR purchases property for a boat launch without contact or any form of consultation with the impacted township.

Once acquisition is complete, the DNR proceeds with development. After implementation of the boat launch, the township is now free to enact whatever use ordinances are required.

The catch is that someone has to enforce these ordinances. So where is the

DNR, or the state for that matter, in providing the township with money for enforcement?

They are long gone, Mr. Richard. So much for a parent's obligation.

If usage control is the answer, what about swimming, skiing, fishing, scuba diving, sailing, and windsurfing?

Will each of these activities get a two-hour time slot on their favorite lake? Not feasible, Mr. Richard. The only feasible solution is for the DNR to work with townships in planning and control of access.

Unfortunately, the DNR does not view cooperation with townships as part of their job.

Virginia R. Mouch, Kewadin, Mich.

State con-con: It could help but it's unlikely to convene

It's automatic. The Legislature didn't put it there. No one signed petitions for it.

Proposal A on the Nov. 8 ballot will ask whether we want a state constitutional convention (con-con). The Michigan Constitution itself says that every 16 years, we shall vote on a con-con. Voters approved the current document in 1962 and in 1978 rejected a new con-con.

Polls show only a handful of voters want a con-con this year. A few groups are saying vote no. But the general silence is worrisome.

Two years ago, religious evangelicals were talking about voting yes to wreak vengeance on public schools: Get rid of the ban on state funds for church-related schools and go to the voucher system; abolish all state curriculum laws except on sexual abstinence; get rid of rules on home "schools"; dump the State Board of Education; maybe re-examine this stuff about free speech for students.

Evangelicals have been effective in many Republican and a few Democratic primaries, mainly on behalf of anti-abortion candidates, usually working invisibly with telephone banks and leaflets in churches. They do less well in a general election or where there's a large turnout.

That tactic is important. In 1961, Democrats, though they dominated state offices, went to sleep in the con-con election, and Republicans took 2-1 control of that body.

Those Republicans were moderates with a genuine reform agenda. They were led by George Romney, Richard Van Dusen, Glenn Allen Jr., Weldon Yeager, Robert Danhof and a list of other progressives. Democratic stars were few but bright: Jack Faxon, Bill Ford, Prof. Harold Norris, Richard Austin and Tom Downs.

One must wonder, however, if the same quality of leadership would emerge in 1996 if voters were to approve a con-con on Nov. 8, 1994. Will the mainstream elements of both parties be asleep in 1996?

The 1962 constitution, as amended, isn't perfect but is still pretty good. It replaced dozens of obscure administrative boards with 20 depart-



TIM RICHARD

Many good changes could be made, but it's doubtful if voters want to risk losing the property tax cuts of last March's Proposal A and the caps on assessment increases.

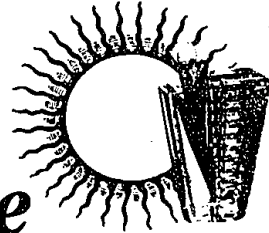
ments, made legislative apportionment better than it had been, got rid of the rural justice of the peace courts, set up a Court of Appeals, allowed a flat-rate income tax, improved finances enormously, gave counties limited home rule, provided for regional authorities, got rid of the April election, gave every university its own board, and set up a State Board of Education that eventually showed some spunk.

Many good changes could be made, but it's doubtful if voters want to risk losing the property tax cuts of last March's Proposal A and the caps on assessment increases.

Perhaps the Proposal A of Nov. 8 will die a quiet death.

Tim Richard reports regularly on the local implications of state and regional events. His Touch-Tone voice mail number is (313) 863-2047, Ext. 1881.

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