

A 'Grand' start

But it takes more than flowers

It's just a new sign — "Farmington Hills Welcomes You" — and some flowers planted around, but it's a start. And a start was needed to improve the lower end of Farmington Hills' main street. We say: Good work and keep it up.

Farmington Hills' latest effort to beautify the Grand River/Eight Mile area was described with a photo and short story on page 9A of Monday's Observer.

Let's be honest about it: Farmington Hills has high and low ends.

High end could be those gated and guarded subdivisions off 13 Mile between Drake and Halsted; or the southeast corner, which has a Northville mailing address; or gravel Power Road north of 11 Mile. Low end is probably that area where Grand River punches through Eight Mile and into Redford Township on its way to Detroit.

The area includes: Botsford Hospital, Botsford Inn, Clarenceville Schools, those little cinder-block motels, and small frame houses on streets like Jacksonville, Jefferson, Roosevelt and Ontario.

The area used to be called Section 36 after its square-mile designation in the former Farmington Township. Years ago, when you said Section 36, people knew exactly what you meant.

But over, say, the last 10 years, the city of Farmington Hills and various homeowner groups have worked hard to rebuild the area and its image. Somewhere along the line, a fancy new name — Olde Town — was grafted on. Surprisingly, the name seems to have taken.

Now it's time to tackle the problems of Grand River Avenue, the main drag through

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that part of Farmington Hills. And it's going to take more than a new sign to fix Grand River.

Broad and busy with traffic, Grand River is divided by a wide, grassy median. Unfortunately, huge utility poles looking like something out of Paul Bunyan's Erector Set sprout from the median.

Those lines are carried above the Eight Mile median all the way from the East Side. At Grand River, they veer northwest, carrying power to the populous suburbs out here. Replacing them is going to be a lot more difficult than just sinking a few hundred annuals in the ground.

Farmington Hills should work with its neighbors, Livonia and Redford, to improve the economic climate of Grand River/Eight Mile. We still remember talking to the business owner on the Redford side who closed up and moved on because he said the area wasn't safe for his customers and employees.

Perhaps the Grand River improvement effort should be patterned after the Eight Mile Road Association that has accomplished lots of good things on both sides of the highway from I-275 to I-75.

Seems as though Grand River/Eight Mile would be an excellent spot for a little multi-community fix-up.

Oh well, there's a sign, some flowers and a promise of more. As we said, it's a good start.

Why are the street signs green?

Questions we've got questions we've got lots and lots of questions. Anyone who can put some honest answers to the following queries will earn something of value: our everlasting gratitude. Hey, curious people in southern Oakland and western Wayne counties really want to know:

- Why is it Middlebelt Road on some street signs and Middle Belt on others? Which is the official spelling? And just what is a middle belt?
- Why do the street signs say Eight Mile on the Oakland County side, but Base Line in Wayne County? What's a base line, anyway? Is it true that if you extended Eight Mile (or is it Base Line?) due west, it would eventually be the Wisconsin-Illinois border?
- How come Newburgh (the road) has an "h" on the end (like Pittsburgh), but Newburg (the school) doesn't?
- Why is it Beech Daly Road all through Redford Township and other parts of Wayne County, but just plain Beech Road once it crosses Eight Mile into Southfield?
- Why is it Six Mile and Five Mile roads in the western suburbs, but McNichols and Fenkell once they enter Detroit? And those roads are six miles and five miles from what?
- Why does just about every substantial town out here have a major road (Southfield,

Farmington, Novi, Wixom, Plymouth, Inkster, etc.) named after it, but not Livonia? How come there's no Livonia Road?

- Didn't our street-namers of yore realize that it'd be confusing to have an Ann Arbor Road and an Ann Arbor Trail running so close to each other?
- Why is it West Chicago Road on some street signs and just W. Chicago on others? Is there an East Chicago Road?
- Speaking of street signs, why are most of them green? A few decades ago, didn't each community have its own individualistic street signs?
- Why are the yellow lights in the traffic signals a different shade of amber in Wayne County than in Oakland?
- Why are there two public school districts in a little place like Redford Township? And why is there such a concentration of private and parochial schools in Redford?
- Why is there a Clarenceville School District, but no Clarenceville? How did little Clarenceville last so long in this day of the mega-district?
- Why aren't school and city (or township) boundaries the same?
- Where can you find a decent bowl of chicken soup around here these days?
- How come no one can answer these questions?

Summer fun



DAN DEANSTAY PHOTOGRAPHER

Park it: It's no wonder the July heat wave brought record-setting crowds to Oakland County parks. Collectively, Red Oaks, Waterford Oaks, Independence Oaks, Glen Oaks, Orion Oaks, Groveland Oaks, Springfield Oaks, Addison Oaks, White Lake Oaks, Rose Oaks and Lyon Oaks are filled with the kinds of warm-weather attractions that draw huge crowds: water sports, camping, golf, fishing, hiking, biking and nature trails. For details about specific park activities and vehicle entrance fees, call the Oakland County Parks information line: (810) 858-0906.

LETTERS

An American?

Phil Power states in his July 20 column that he's glad we are normalizing relations with Vietnam because "I'm an American."

I wonder if Mr. Power thinks it's American to lose young men in battle while never learning their fate? I wonder if Mr. Power thinks it's American to explain to 1,700 families of MIAs that their country stands ready to abandon any hope of learning what happened to their sons, fathers, and husbands?

Mr. Power should re-examine what it means to be American. When he does, he will awaken to the fact that turning our backs on our military heroes for the sake of doing business in Vietnam is morally offensive to what it really means to be American.

Raymond Dubin, Farmington Hills

In the system

Reading about putting Farmington's records of infrastructure on computer gave my family a huge chuckle.

One would figure a house built in 1947 would be in the city's records somewhere (other than the tax rolls).

But in the dozen years we've owned it, more times than not when we call the city we're either told: "We have no records" (when we wanted the site of our sewer tap in) or "You don't live in Farmington, call Farmington Hills."

The second response was cute until about a year ago when the fire department went the wrong way when they got to our street. Lucky it was a minor incident.

Since the humans don't know where we are, it will be interesting to see if a computer can do better. Of course the computer will help only if the humans remember to put us in the system.

The Achtenbergs, Farmington

Many are concerned

Like most interested readers, we fail to show enough appreciation of the "freedom of the press." The Farmington Ob-

server is a community newspaper that is interested in what happens in the Farmington area.

The editor's personal concern and that of his staff in "getting involved" was amply demonstrated in the series of articles on homeowners trying to save their way of life on North Power Road.

The Observer's editorial struck the core of our cause. The patience and perseverance of Bill Coutant lends credibility to the often abused title news reporter. Bill even has often given up personal time to attending municipal meetings and listening to often boring issues that rule our way of life, such as zoning and that is the important issue here.

The North Power Road/Philbrick Farms Homeowners Association has been waging a long campaign to save the area's history, natural beauty and rural way of life that has been severely threatened in recent months.

The Farmington Observer's accurate and fair appraisal of events regarding North Power Road are greatly appreciated by the Homeowners Association and neighbors who support our efforts.

With Farmington Hills more than 84 percent developed, spirited citizens are coming together to preserve what is left and to protect its countryside atmosphere, one of the major reasons for many of them moving here in the first place.

Most cities would relish the loyalty displayed by a lot of citizens trying to protect a half-mile of road that "goes nowhere."

Fortunately, Farmington Hills does, Bill Costick, the city manager, the directors of engineering and public services and their staffs patiently guided us through the maze of having North Power Road designated a natural beauty road and clarified guidelines for rezoning.

This type of action and the freedom of a caring press are what has made this country and community great and we are proud to be a part of it.

Our quest for a rezoning change to an RA-1a is a total neighborhood effort with absolutely no financial gain being sought. Not one dollar was spent to provide any service and/or assistance. It is truly a "non-profit" endeavor where all contribute to the worthy cause of protecting what we now have.

By Kornicky,
North Power Road/Philbrick Farms
Homeowners Association

COMMUNITY VOICE

QUESTION:

Is Detroit Edison doing a good job delivering the power?

We asked this question at the Downtown Branch of the Farmington Community Library.



"Fair. Edison should have gotten our power back sooner."
Ellen Smith
Farmington Hills



"All in all, I think Edison does a pretty good job."
Steve Damply
Farmington Hills



"I have no complaints."
Steve Damply
Farmington Hills



"I didn't lose power. I'm sure they're doing the best they can."
Tanya Blake
Redford Township

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— Philip Power