

Hills to keep residents involved in 96

BY BILL COUFANT
STAFF WRITER

The city of Farmington Hills will have a full plate of goals for 1996.

With many major projects successfully completed last year, the city is looking at redevelopment, a new youth program and traffic and land use issues will be important this year. And making sure the citizens are included in important discussions concerning the city's future will be a top priority.

"We are planning to have regional meetings with COHA (Farmington Hills Council of Homeowners)," said Mayor Aldo Vagnuzzi. "We used to do it with one subdivision (at a time), but that involved too many meetings."

Vagnuzzi said the redevelopment of the southeast part of the city became a priority because of efforts by the Old Town Homeowners Association. Improvements to the Grand River corridor were made possible because of resident and business input and support, he said.

Rather than try to meet with every subdivision association, the city council will try to set aside an open Monday and meet with association boards in various parts of the city during the year.

"It's been their influence that helped us tighten up the PUD (planned unit development) ordinance and include a referendum in it," Vagnuzzi said.

Land use, which has been a

controversial issue in fast growing Farmington Hills, will continue to be important with several odd parcels and some potentially large developments that could be proposed in the 14 Mile, Northwestern and Orchard Lake areas.

The city will complete its land use master plan study this year, the city's bible of land use.

"The last master plan study was in 1979," said Costick.

The city council will be taking up a request to rezone property along Howard Road to a less dense zoning, just as it did with Power Road north of 11 Mile.

With the passage of a 1-mill public safety tax, the city has hired an architect for the design of a new centrally located fire station and will have nine new police officers, a dispatcher and four new firefighters ready to hire on July 1, when money from the tax becomes available.

The fifth fire station should be complete by July 1997. The city plans to man the station on a 24-hour basis at that time.

Another new venture in a different arena the city will take on is the decentralized teen centers program. With \$200,000 in city money from the parks and recreation tax that was earmarked for teen recreation, along with the \$385,000 in grant money the city leveraged, the program will be in full swing by spring.

The program will house after school programs for teens at the YMCA on Farmington, the Farmington Hills Activities Center on

11 Mile and at a location in the southeast part of the city. The program was developed through the city's commission on children, youth and families and focuses on early teens who are not old enough to drive but who need a recreation program apart from younger children.

The city is also developing a transportation scheme to get kids to the centers from the middle schools. Vagnuzzi said the SMART millage that passed last year will benefit the program by providing use of a small bus.

Another redevelopment area the city will be working on is the Eight Mile corridor. Farmington Hills belongs to a consortium of cities that are working to improve the road. The city along with Livonia, and Wayne and Oakland Counties will chip in \$257,500 each to provide match to a federal grant of \$4,120,000 to widen the road to five lanes from Farmington to Halsted this summer.

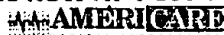
Some other specific projects include a technology study, major traffic study, expansion of the DPW facility, widening of the 13 Mile and Middlebelt intersection, completion of an engineering study for the M-5/10 Mile and Halsted interchange, engineering for reconstruction of part of Northwestern Highway and increased beautification efforts.

City staff and council members met Jan. 12 and 13 to discuss those and other goals including expanding the city's business base, rethinking community policing, expanding the fire department's EMS service, reviewing the ice arena operation and budget and looking at future parks and recreation issues, including use of newly acquired property at Founders Sports Park, summer use of the ice arena and future consideration of a community swimming pool.

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