

Check older trees, limbs Hamlet

BY TIM SMITH
STAFF WRITER

There was nothing anybody could have done to prevent the July 23 poofside tragedy that killed Melissa Gurr. By all accounts, the 18-foot-long, 5-inch-thick tree limb that struck her on the head was completely healthy.

"But in Farmington, with many old trees, the accident should serve as a reminder for people to get into the habit of visually checking the trees on their property," said city manager Frank Lamph.

"We have an ordinance that states the public must maintain trees as best as possible and to remove any dead or diseased areas," Lamph said Friday. "The problem is determining that. All we can do is remind people."

And, if they spot a potentially hazardous area, to contact professionals to come in and remove it.

Danger signs include branches drooping or foliage yellowing and/or withering earlier than normal.

"If they see one part of the tree lose leaves and (another) part where they are retained,"

Lamph emphasized, "just have those (trees) inspected. In an older community people have to be more aware of that. They have a responsibility to safety."

Garr was critically injured when the tree limb fell and struck her on the head at Farmington Glen Aquatics Center. She was baby-sitting three children at the pool when the accident took place.

The day after the tragedy, Farmington Glen director Mark Papineau described the branch as fully vegetated. "Somebody came up... and asked if we'd be checking other things. What can you do except go up in the trees and jump up and down on the branches?"

Mike Wiggins, Farmington public safety spokesman, said the branch that struck Melissa was seemingly healthy.

With resignation, Kubitakey recalls how their quaint area was suddenly invaded by bulldozers and construction crews. "There was nothing we could do about it," he said.

His wife Carol keeps a photo album of the area, which she shows to visitors to indicate how the area looked before developers arrived.

In the transition, Kubitakey said they've inherited good neighbors.

"It's a nice subdivision," he said. "It's young and it's pretty tight-knit. Everyone looks out for everyone."

The Haynes family experienced the Hamlet's hospitality right away.

The family moved in March after living in Chihuahua, Mexico for 2 1/2 years and a neighbor welcomed them with a plateful of brownies.

The sub also has a picnic,

Christmas cookie exchange and progressive dinner where neighbors go house to house to sample various dishes.

"That was in March when it's still cold out; That's a good sign," said Laurie Haynes, whose family used to live in Taylor before her husband was transferred to Mexico. "I've been in neighborhoods where you don't talk to your neighbors until the summer when it's warm out."

The Hamlet blends country living with suburban convenience, Haynes said. As for the proposed development that will be in her back yard, Haynes admitted she's not happy.

"We can't complain, though; We did the same thing," Haynes said.

The development won't affect one charming aspect of the sub Haynes likes: The fact there is no fences to separate property and children from playing in each other's yards.

"I like it that the kids can run around," she said. "In Taylor, there were fences and people would say something if you went on their lawn."

A gaggle of kids gravitate from yards to driveways unimpeded. Only the ringing sound of an approaching ice cream truck gets them to stand at attention in a semi-straight line.

That gives parents a moment to chat among themselves. Candy Alexander, also of the EDC, which ponied up \$90,000 in 1993 for an engineering study, noted that the existing interchange, which is in both Farmington Hills and Farmington, "has a severe economic impact on the industrial park around here. (Businesses) can't get their trucks in."

Neither could the Farmington Hills Fire Department. Lampi said the interchange was so problematic for emergency vehicles that the department, in the early '90s, was forced to close its station in the 10 Mile Road industrial park and relocate to the more residential Nine Mile-Drake area.

"There's a lot of frustration around here," Gray said.

Despite that frustration, people such as Darda and Chatham Hills subdivision resident Sylvia Compagnoni said they are encouraged that something is in the works at long last.

"I know they're trying to do a good job," Darda said. "This is the only alternative they have. It's a little late to lay down concrete and build new bridges."

Compagnoni said the project "seems like it will help a lot, just by eliminating the left-hand turns."

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The existing bridge might not be widened. But proposed improvements, to be funded by a combination of federal, state and local dollars, include the following:

- Adding a new loop ramp for access to westbound M-5, with an additional lane built to accommodate the traffic that uses the loop.
- Converting Freedom Road to one-way westbound at Tree Hill Drive.
- Widening off-ramp terminals for eastbound and westbound M-5 traffic.
- Resurfacing Grand River, Freedom Road and several M-5 on/off ramps.

"The major new thing people are going to see is the loop," said Bokmanis. "That will eliminate the left-hand-turn from Grand River to westbound M-5" which often causes bottlenecks. "And

we'll add a right-hand-turn lane for the loop."

Although plans for the project are moving forward enough to show them to the public, the first turn of dirt is months away.

The final design won't be completed until the end of the year, primarily because more sites need to be acquired, Bokmanis said. Foremost among those is Globe Furniture, which sits in the middle of the planned loop ramp to westbound M-5 (formerly M-102). But no sale appears imminent.

"We have made them an offer and the last thing I knew was that they rejected it," Bokmanis said.

Rick Lampi, community development coordinator for the city of Farmington Hills, said the project is needed to reduce traffic; keep new businesses from finding somewhere else to locate; and keep existing businesses such as Moore's from leaving.

"There's a lot of development going on in this area," Lampi said. "To keep that going, we have to be able to move traffic in and out of here."

At least Moore is sticking around. According to Howard Gray, of the Economic Development Corp. of Farmington Hills, "Traffic is getting to the point where business people don't

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'RETURN IN 4 WEEKS'
What is behind these doctor's words at the end of your appointment? Is the choice of return appointment a habit, or has your physician become in this choice of your next visit?

In arthritis a logic exists. For example, if you start a new medicine, it is better you return approximately 4 weeks later for an evaluation of the medicine. Most rheumatologic drugs work by establishing a level concentration in the blood and thereby keep inflammation under control. Achieving a level sufficient to be therapeutic takes 10 days to 2 weeks.

To give the new drug an opportunity to work requires at least another 2 weeks, thus a 4 week return visit is reasonable.

Other rheumatologic conditions may need you to return in one week. For example, in polymyalgia rheumatica, the therapy of choice is daily oral steroids. No diagnosis of polymyalgia is so certain that could receive the relatively high steroid dose needed and not return for a month. A return one week later is in order to see if you have responded sufficiently to justify maintaining you on steroid medication.

If you present with a swollen knee that could be gout or may be an infected joint, your doctor may want you back the next day!

Your physician's recommendation for a return visit comes from experience and medical sense. If you have a question of his rationale, ask your doctor immediately. Keeping future appointments is important as being on time today.

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