

# Hills eyes EDC help for Super Kmart project

## Developer still wants DDA for 14 Mile/Orchard Lake plan

BY LARRY O'CONNOR  
STAFF WRITER

City officials and a proponent for a major redevelopment on Orchard Lake and 14 Mile have come to a major realization: They need each other.

Malan Realty wants to build a Super Kmart as part of commercial and residential overhaul. To see the project through, the firm needs extra money to buy existing residential property that is going for much higher, commercial prices.

City officials like the redevelopment plan, which fits in with their master plan and will spruce up what they see as a tired area. They're just not keen on Malan's suggestion to form a

Downtown Development Authority to make it happen.

The developer sees tax increment financing plan through a DDA as the best way to get the project done. Malan officials and council members discussed the DDA idea during a study session Monday.

A TIF plan could capture tax revenue growth of \$400,000-\$500,000 annually for 12 years—a net of \$6.8 million that the developer said is needed to cover additional costs of buying land.

"It's not a situation where Malan is looking for some type of handout," said Larry Lichtman, Malan Realty attorney. "They are going to spend a lot of money and their tenants are going to

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pay top dollar for leases. With that, there are still some shortfalls. A DDA makes sense."

City council members are reluctant to proceed with a DDA for many reasons. Chief among them is the city can only have one designated DDA; council members are not sure they want to cash in that one chip on Orchard Lake and 14 Mile.

Council members asked city staff to look at other options—including grants and road funding—to go along with their alternative Economic Development Corporation finance plan, which

would raise \$4 million through capture of the city's portion of tax growth.

Under the alternative, the developer would pay the costs but would be reimbursed by the EDC for public facilities. The city's captured tax growth from the project would be turned over to the EDC to repay the developer.

"We're \$2.8 million from where we want to be," said Councilwoman Nancy Bates, who suggested the city and developer work together to find a way to make up the difference. "I'm

just not comfortable with a TIF there."

Added Councilman Jon Grant: "You're not going to get four votes on council for this (DDA and TIF). I can hear that and I can count. I am hearing support for the project."

A TIF doesn't raise property taxes, but merely captures the growth in value from the city, county and community college portion. A TIF is still a tough sell to residents, council members said. Public schools are exempt from TIFs because of Proposal A. Also, county and community college trustees can opt out of any TIF plan, reducing the money a DDA could capture.

Malan officials said they needed to know as soon as possible where the city stands. Another developer is already courting upscale retailers for a development across 14 Mile in West Bloomfield, said Mike Kaline of

Malan Realty.

Existing commercial property owners in the Orchard Lake and 14 Mile area are also getting edgy. "I have to deal with those people," Kaline said.

City Manager Daniel Hobbs said his staff will meet with Malan officials to look at different ways to raise the \$2.8 million needed. That was enough for Malan officials, who want to proceed.

"What I hear here is the collective rolling up of sleeves," Lichtman said.

### CLARIFICATION

A story and headlines on the road paving project for Kimberley Subdivision in Farmington Hills were published Nov. 30 with the name of the neighborhood misspelled.



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