

Mail

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circulating last fall that Starbucks was on the way, she thanked center landlord Kimco Realty Corp. for helping find the new location.

"Kimco has bent over backwards to accommodate me," Trzcinski said.

Time of change

"Still, walking over to her soon-to-open shop next to Dublin Optometric, she lamented the demise of the 'mom and pop' businesses that long characterized down-

town Farmington. The city and Downtown Development Authority want bigger retail players, often run by out-of-state corporations, to excite customers from all over the region to come shop in town.

"We need more personality," Trzcinski said, recalling the old era when customers and merchants knew each other on a first-name basis.

Agreeing was Sandy Cloutier, owner of Dagwood's Deli.

"I'd like to see all the familiar

faces out here again," said Cloutier, who opened her business in 1984. "I remember when everybody knew everybody else by name and I miss that. It doesn't seem the same."

Cloutier doesn't think all the movement in the Downtown Farmington Center is over, either. "I think they're going to move a couple more things around."

Nadine Rafferty, vice president of Kimco's Midwest region, would only say that the Realtor is "talking with a lot of people" about the possibility of joining the shopping center.

About the parking situation, Rafferty said "I guess that's what we've done with the vacancies ... And not all of those cars are our cars."

The city of Farmington owns the parking lot.

Although acknowledging that Starbucks is "a big draw" and that veteran merchants in the center could benefit in the long run, Dagwood's Cloutier is hesitant to thoroughly back the changes. She sighed, and was unable to give a complete answer about how she thought Starbucks would impact parking. "If it (the parking lot) starts filling up with coffee drinkers ..."

Parking is no better across the lot. "Parking is terrible," said Deanna Jefferson, a manager at the Brewsters Coffee-serving Big Apple Bagel. But Jefferson actually looks forward to the late March or early April opening of Starbucks.

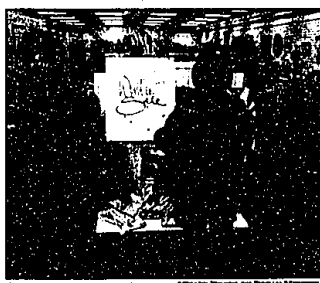
"That's what America is all about, competition," Jefferson said. "You can't be afraid that someone's going to move in and take away our business. If you have a good product, people will keep coming back."

Dublin Optometric's Susan Dublin, a member of the Downtown Development Authority, said "Starbucks coffee is where it's at today. That will be a nice update to the center. It will bring (the center) more into the '90s."

Boon for retailers

Both Monique Seymour, a manager at Dot's, and Sara Fluter, a supervisor at the Bon Ton Shoppe, said the new look of the center will be a plus for the retailers.

However, whether or not the American Cancer Society Discovery Shop will be among them for some time to come remains up in the air.



STAFF PHOTO BY SARA MITCHELL

Discovering: Shoppers at the American Cancer Society's Discovery Shop will have a second site to visit.

Over the next week, a new Discovery Shop, featuring upscale housewares and antiques, will open at 33246 Grand River.

But, rumors to the contrary aside, American Cancer Society spokeswoman Dru Szczerba said the existing resale shop (featuring mostly clothing) will continue to operate in the center, next to Dot's. That means, for now at least, customers will have to get used to two Discovery Shops within walking distance of each other.

"We are staying in the larger space as long as we're able," Szczerba said Friday, adding that Kimco has been renewing the shop's lease on a monthly basis for a year. "As far as we know, (that arrangement) is indefinite."

Kimco's Rafferty would not comment about the Discovery Shop's current situation, or its future at the center, other than to verify it is operating under a month-by-month lease.

Szczerba said the American Cancer Society decided to open up the Grand River store "in anticipation" of the lease not being renewed at some point.

"If something happened to the lease, then we have a place for all of our dedicated volunteers to go," she explained. "The community has been very supportive of the shop and we didn't want to leave downtown Farmington."

She added that the push for big-name stores at the expense of smaller businesses is happening all over the country, not just in downtown Farmington.

"It's just business," Szczerba said.

Starbucks spills beans on new site

BY TIM SMITH
STAFF WRITER

Following renovation and retelling, the Downtown Farmington Center Starbucks likely will pour its first cup of cappuccino in late March or early April, said company spokesman Mike Weaver, director of store development for Michigan.

Weaver said the chain has a long-term lease with the Kimco Realty Corp. Renovation of two adjacent storefronts at the Grand River end of the center into a "full-fledged" Starbucks will begin in early February.

"I'd say we're excited about the opportunity to come to downtown Farmington," Weaver said last week from his office in Chicago. "The Farmington store will make a nice addition to the community."

Starbucks also is readying a store in the Grosse Pointe area. Farmington's will be in a race to become the 10th in Michigan.

The confirmation that Starbucks has a deal to open up in Farmington, rumored for several months, was viewed as a plus by Farmington Assistant City Manager Bill Richards.

"Obviously, we think it's real good news for the community," Richards said. "It's clearly the kind of (business) the city and Downtown Development Authority (is) attempting to attract to the community."

Weaver said it hasn't been determined what hours the coffee shop will be open. "We'll stay open as late as the customer tells us too."

But he emphasized there is room for Starbucks and other restaurants in the area to co-exist. The Downtown Farmington Center already offers several options for coffee drinkers, including Big Apple Bagel and Dagwood's Deli.

"The bagel guys are more of a lunch business and we don't sell sandwiches," Weaver said. "We sell morning pastries and coffee and that's it."

Weaver promised people won't be disappointed by Starbucks.

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By Stuart M. Feldheim

Attorney at Law

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