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"The point of the overlay," Hartsock said, "is it doesn't take any extra effort (in Farmington) than if you parked at Twelve Oaks."

Hartsock said Twelve Oaks was chosen for the comparison because of familiarity. "A lot of our residents shop there."

Farmington City Manager Frank Lauhoff conjured up a scenario for comparison purposes.

"It's like standing in the middle of Twelve Oaks mall in the middle of the information area and walking to Sears," Lauhoff said.

Hartsock said it is "interesting, just to look at the distance people walk at Twelve Oaks and not think too much about it," but in Farmington, park closer to a particular store and think parking is an issue. "So it's perception."

Pros and cons

Lauhoff conceded there are pros and cons pertaining to downtowns and malls. On the good side for Farmington, and commercial districts like it, patrons receive more personalized attention and service — sometimes from owners themselves.

Protection from winter weather is a given plus for malls. But they also provide shoppers with wider variety, under one roof, with the same opening and closing times. That is in comparison to Farmington's staggered business hours, Lauhoff said.

"Businesses have to collective-

ly make an effort to be open later," Lauhoff said. "Especially on Friday and Saturday nights."

The map comparison, which city officials hope will be used to bring about improvements to parking, senior citizen accessibility and traffic flow (both pedestrians and vehicles), at least, is a good discussion starter.

"It's an interesting note to see as much parking (downtown) as there is at Twelve Oaks Mall," said Farmington Public Safety Director Gary Goss, also on the city's Traffic and Safety Board. Goss added that Farmington's parking actually is often more convenient than the mall's, because people have less of a distance to walk to their destination.

But, Goss emphasized, allowances have to be made for the fact that people who shop in a downtown often are short-term customers. Mall customers, on the other hand, sometimes plan their entire day around a shopping excursion.

So a mall customer wouldn't mind walking a quarter-mile from their car, whereas some patrons at the Downtown Farmington Center might complain about having to walk across the municipal lot to grab coffee at Starbucks or pick up a faucet at Damman's Hardware.

Different shopping needs

"You don't go to Twelve Oaks mall to buy a faucet," Goss said. "... Someone going for a singular item, to go in and out, wants to

park near the store."

Actually, the Traffic and Safety Board, in 1998, videotaped the Downtown Farmington Center parking lot as part of a safety study. It was discovered that parking spaces were turning over rapidly, every 30 minutes.

Goss welcomes the map comparison. But he also would like to see some concrete improvements made to enhance downtown parking; spaces can be added through reconfiguration of lots and new striping.

"From my perspective, these are good problems to have," Goss said. "We'll be working on these all summer."

Another potential solution is to make sure store employees don't park too close to their jobs if it comes at the expense of convenient parking for customers.

To free up customer parking, Lauhoff said a pilot program is expected to soon begin for the municipal parking lot on the north side of Grand River, behind the Civic Theatre and Legato. The city council also in February will likely authorize placing "Customer Only" signs up in the lot.

Hartsock reiterated that parking won't be available "in front of every store every time. But that shouldn't discourage them. There's still ample parking."

Sometimes, however, it does "require a little bit of effort" to find that parking, the mayor conceded.

RAINBOW RECOGNITION AWARD HONOREES

Chairpersons' Award

This year, the Multicultural Multiracial Community Council is pleased to honor **Aldo Vagnoni** with the 2000 Chairpersons' Award. Aldo has worked with the MCMR Council from its inception ten years ago and been a steadfast supporter. With all the demands of being Farmington Hills Mayor, he always found time to attend the MCMR programs and the Steering Committee Meetings. Coming to the United States from Italy as a small boy, Aldo has a sensitivity to the challenges that new immigrants face, especially children. This sensitivity has made him an invaluable part of

the MCMR. His personal story has served as an inspiration to all who know him. Although no longer serving in a mayor capacity, as a long time resident of Farmington/Farmington Hills, Aldo continues his involvement and commitment to the MCMR.

Award Honorees

Alena Acker, a student at Mercy High School, has distinguished herself as a person who truly loves all people and learning about their cultures and customs. After traveling to both Germany and Japan, Alena discovered the beauty of all people and it changed her life. She decided to run for the Human

Relations Council at school to further the work of this council, she has now served for three years. Her classmates view her as a warm-hearted, giving and talented young woman.

Sue Anker, along with Laura Miner are being recognized for their efforts establishing and implementing measures to promote racial and cultural understanding at Power Middle School. Mrs. Anker formed a multi-cultural group at Power representing their diversity. They included students from special education, various ethnic populations, and varied family backgrounds. This has become a "think tank" for issues including living with our differences, Martin Luther King Day, and concerns regarding the problems of middle school students.

Baharrah Aslani, a student at Mercy High School, is being honored for the open way in which she teaches others about her own background and culture. She supports understanding in religious diversity, in particular. She is a member of the Human Relations Council and supports the Ethnic Bazaar. Baharrah is very well accepted by her peers as a leader and is a person who is open and accepting of others. She has a great deal of self-esteem and loves to share her background with others.

Rahbir Bedi, a student at Farmington High School, has made many contributions in the area of diversity; not just at

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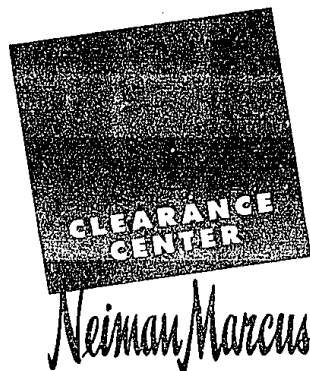
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racial committees like the one shared by Farmington and Farmington Hills. Costick said, "Invisible people. They pervade the news, with regard to issues as diverse as Detroit water and mortgage lending."

The solutions, Costick said, come in a continuing effort to fulfill the Multicultural/Multi-Racial Council's mission: To

ensure all residents feel comfortable within their communities.

"What greater works can we do than to help someone?" Costick asked. "It's the greatest gift we can give in our lives. Please know what you do has substance, and in many, many ways, makes this a better community."



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