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Landowner fights city hall and loses

By JACKIE KLEIN

Harry Gurvis has been fighting Southfield City Hall for more than a decade and is still coming out on the losing end of the stick.

Gurvis, a Southfield real estate salesman, suffered his latest defeat Monday night when city council turned down his fourth bid since 1966 to rezone his property on the southwest corner of Eleven Mile and Evergreen for low-rise apartment use. Gurvis has owned the 7.69-acre parcel and paid taxes on it for a number of years.

"In 1966, the single-family residential plot was twice requested to be rezoned for multiple dwellings by Gurvis, but the petitions were denied," said Southfield City Planner Donald Gross who favors the latest rezoning bid. "Part of the reason for denial was the Eleven Mile frontage of the parcel was in the path of the proposed I-696 expressway. But the main reason was there were no major office developments in the area as there are today."

"In 1968, the piece was rezoned for townhouses which would allow 52 dwelling units. With low-rise apartment zoning, 90 dwelling units could be accommodated on the site. We encourage this low density development."

THE ZONING would be reasonable, Gross said, because the character of the area has changed with the development of Traveler's Tower, Prudential Town Center, Central Park Plaza and the widening of Evergreen.

Also, he maintained, the I-696 development plan recommends multiple family dwellings along the corridor in this area. But Southfield Planning Commission recommended denial of Gurvis's request, claiming the rezoning would have an adverse effect on area homeowners and traffic on Evergreen.

Southfield City Council Monday agreed with planning commissioners to the tune of a 4-2 vote for denial.

Proponents were Councilmen Stephen Cooper and Jean McDonnell. And Gurvis, a patient man, finally blew his cool.

"I can't see where another 38 units (the difference between 52 townhouses and 90 apartments) will create a traffic problem on Evergreen," he contended. "I didn't put up a battle in 1966 when nothing was built around my property. But the office buildings there now generate more cars than my development ever would."

"I've been very generous to this city. I dedicated land for the widening of Evergreen, and I provided an easement for a drain in the area. I've appeared before this council year after year, and I get no appreciation. I don't want to hire a lawyer and raise a ruckus, but I've been fighting this for years and it's ridiculous."

ROGER SMITH, Southfield transportation department director supported Gurvis's claims. He agreed the development would generate very few cars per day to add to the Evergreen traffic.

"We haven't widened Eleven Mile because of the proposed I-696 expressway, so the Eleven Mile-Evergreen roadway system is congested," Smith said. "If we had our right, we would have widened the route. Eleven Mile is a major, city street and is ineligible for outside funding. If I-696 is built, we wouldn't get back our investment if we improved Eleven Mile. "It would cost \$400,000 to widen the road to five lanes. Lathrup Village owns part of the Eleven Mile roadway, but I assume that city wouldn't contribute to the cost."

Cooper got his licks in too. He said the Eleven Mile-Evergreen corridor wasn't intensely developed until construction of Prudential Town Center.

"I predicted the Prudential tower would create enormous traffic volumes, and I opposed it. But other members of this council encouraged the development."

As for Gurvis, there's little doubt he will continue fighting city hall.



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MD telethon to air on TV2

Jerry Lewis' Labor Day Telethon to benefit the Muscular Dystrophy Association will be aired on WJBK-TV2 for the third consecutive year.

It will begin at 9 p.m. on Sunday, Sept. 4 and run until 6:30 p.m. on Monday, Sept. 5.

TV2 anchorman Joe Glover will host the entire twenty-one-and-one-half-hours of the show with help from TV9 anchorwomen Beverly Payne and Robby Timmons, and weather reporter Jo-Jo Shuty-MacGregor.

Woody Willis and Vic Caputo will be on hand, along with TV2 reporters Murray Feldman, Ron Sanders, Joe Weaver, Charlie Neal and Shirley Eder.

In addition, TV2's Sir Graves Ghastly and Bozo the Clown will host the children's fishbowl on the TV2 grounds, where children (and adults) can put money into a gigantic fishbowl to help the fight.

The telethon will cut away locally to TV2 for 15 minutes every hour, where viewers will see local celebrities, entertainers, and media people from around town.



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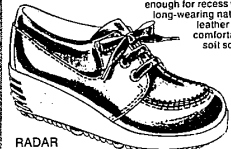
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