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Hills' housing proposal draws residents' wrath

By LYNN ORR

They may send up a Confederate flag. Residents of the southeast section of Farmington Hills are tired of being referred to as "you people down there" and "the problem area."

They abhor the tag "The Lower Hills," recently conferred upon them by a telephone cover issued by the Farmington Jaycees.

They resent the cold shoulder they get from City Hall, and the lack of response to their complaints. They're tired of labels, and they particularly dislike the notion that anyone south of Ten Mile lacks ambition, brains, or sincerity.

If secession were an answer, they might tackle it; but for now, they're quietly banding together in hopes of fighting off what they consider the latest invasion of their territory—proposals for low income housing.

"We'd love to see the program work, but we don't want the housing jammed in here," says Delphine Piechowski, a 42-year resident of Section 36, one of the most densely populated areas of the city. It is located in the very southeast corner of the city.

RESIDENTS SAY population, rather than racial bigotry, is why they reject the city's current low income housing plan. And at that, they're willing to take their fair share of new housing if the city's plan includes scattered sites also directed at other areas.

Let the southeast section be tagged for the final, rather than the opening, of new construction for low income families, they say.

They fear the city will build low income housing in the southeast section and then cut off the program, thus further economically segregating the area.

"I don't care if it's black or white low income, we don't need anymore here," Mrs. Piechowski, adding that a few black families live in the area.

More people is something the southeast section doesn't need, they say.

"To ask us to take more of what we've got is unfair," explains Darlene Pettey, one of the newest members of the tight-knit community. She's lived on Oxford for eight years.

"This is already a problem area, we know that. But that's compounding the injury."

RESIDENTS ALSO are concerned about the lack of a voice in City Hall. Some of them worked diligently on the city's Ad Hoc Committee for Citizen Participation. The group formed to assist in developing goals for the community development program. The program centers on rehabilitating homes through a loans and grants program funded through the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

Some of the committee members, including Mrs. Pettey, revolted when they failed to get answers about the target area for low-income housing last month.

Along with Mrs. Piechowski and Mrs. Pettey, southeast residents Massie Kurzeja, Ed Christmas, Gisele Wing, and Marguerite Culham sat down with the Observer last week to discuss the issues. The residents want their views heard, but fear no one is listening to them.

Their own elected spokespersons, including Home-owners President Anne Struble (former Farmington School Board member) and Judy Guertin, long associated with the group, have failed to appear at public

hearings on the low income housing issue, the residents say.

Mrs. Kurzeja incurred the wrath of housing proponents last month when she called for a public hearing on the community development program and specifically asked for the target areas for low income housing.

'I don't care if it's black or white low-income, we don't need any more here.'

—Delphine Piechowski

The city's HUD application cites census tracts from the southeast section as the target area, while Ad Hoc Committee members were told low income housing would be scattered throughout the city, they say.

At a recent public hearing, councilmember Catherine Jones asked administration to investigate the possibility of amending the application to include the entire city.

"That's an important step, Mrs. Kurzeja, says; but 'good faith' still has a long way to go, she admits.

"Like other residents, she intends to fight the program if it means low income housing for the southeast and no where else.

CITY HALL FAILS to listen to the southeast section, she and others contend.

"We're the oldest area in Farmington Hills," says Christmas, a 57-year resident. "We're the most populated because we're the original settlement."

Neither the township nor city administration's have listened to residents, he says. Zoning violations aren't enforced, and absentee landlords are the worst offenders in the area, he insists.

"Our worst homes are rental homes because the landlords aren't required to keep them up," he says. Condemned buildings are vandalized and left standing because the city neglects the area, he maintains.

"I'm tired of people telling us what we need and no one coming down and asking us what we need," Mrs. Piechowski, says, a statement other residents echo.

"Zoning can't solve all our problems," Mrs. Wing adds, but enforcement of the codes would help, she insists.

WHY DOES the city insist on enforcing the codes to the limit for those applying for the loans and grants programs, while allowing absentee landlords off the hook, they ask.

Hills Building Inspector Richard Young's recent presentation of the loans and grants program convinced many potential applicants that they might not be getting in hot water in they consider the program, the residents say.

Young told the residents that all zoning inspections must be corrected, even if the loan funds fail to cover the expenditures, Mrs. Kurzeja says. That possibility frightens many impoverished families who just get by as it is, she says. She added that Young included a scratched toilet seat or nicked bathtub in his review.

"He said he was going to check our housekeeping," Mrs. Piechowski added. Residents left the meeting with the feeling that they couldn't afford an inspection for fear that the city might condemn their homes, whether or not the loans were approved, they say.

Art activist adds new role

Marion Daniel is a spectator with a difference.

As the newly appointed representative from Farmington to the Oakland County Cultural Commission, she will participate in meetings and transmit ideas to the community.

Her position is a logical step for a woman who spent the last few years watching art grow in the community.

At home and on the job with the Farmington Community Band, Mrs. Daniel is a spectator and a booster.

"I don't play an instrument but I think the world would be an awfully gloomy place without the arts," she said.

Even though she isn't an artist in her own right, Mrs. Daniel is surrounded by musicians.

Her daughter, Marianne, 16, plays the oboe and English horn in the Farmington Community Band and the University of Michigan extension band.

Her proud mother calls her musical abilities "advanced beyond other kids her age."

Her involvement with her daughter's musical endeavors opened Mrs. Daniel's eyes to other cultural opportunities in the area.

AS A REPRESENTATIVE to the Oakland Council, Mrs. Daniel's goal is to help others in the community reach a broader understanding of the arts.

"I would like to do the best job I could," she said.

"I would try to bring culture to more people in the area. There are an awful lot of things around but people don't know about them," she said.

Her acceptance by the Farmington

City Council to the cultural group came as a surprise to her. Her

employer, William Conroy, of the Farmington Community Band nominated her for the position.

"I was railroaded," she laughed.

"But I said I'd give it a try."

Gas tax hike proposed

Drivers pay or potholes reign

By PATRICIA LACROIX

Farmington area motorists will travel over poorly maintained roads next year, if help fails to arrive soon from Lansing.

That is the prediction of local officials who are anxiously awaiting legislative action on the proposed State Road and Transportation package. The multi-bill package has been tied up for months but is expected to come to a vote when the legislature reconvenes on Sept. 5.

If the package is approved, Farmington Hills will get an additional \$125,000 for local road maintenance and \$150,000 for major road maintenance in the coming year, an increase of about 25 percent over what was available last year.

Farmington will also receive about 25 percent more, or about \$35,000.

Officials in both cities said the added money is urgently needed.

Farmington City Mgr. Deadman, however, said that while the additional money will help in maintaining roads, the city will still barely break even in costs and expenses.

"We've had to let road improvements go by because we simply don't have the money," he said, adding that

on several occasions the city has dipped into the general fund to pay for repairs.

Monday passed a resolution expressing their support of the package, saying that they "have found it necessary to limit road maintenance programs" and to defer construction of needed roads because of limited funds.

The local roads are our most immediate financial problem," he said. "Unless they (the legislators) approve this measure, the only option will be to struggle along as best as we can."

Farmington Hills City Council last Monday passed a resolution expressing their support of the package, saying that they "have found it necessary to limit road maintenance programs" and to defer construction of needed roads because of limited funds.

The added appropriations would come from increases in state gasoline taxes and automobile weight and licensing fees. The legislation is expected to cost the average driver about \$20 more per year.

Immediate passage of the package is essential if the higher fees are to be collected when 1979 license plates go on sale in November.

State Rep. Wilbur Brotherton (R-Farmington) said that taxes for road maintenance have not been increased

Great seasonings

This is the year fashion returns to the great naturals. The 1978 fall wardrobe will be sprinkled with the pure luxury of wool, silk, leather and fur. Earth tones and a salt-of-the-earth mood make a big play. We call it the great seasonings. The new feeling is reflected against settings such as the salt mounds at the Oakland County salt storage area in Troy. The great sea-

sonings spicing up fall's look include the squared shoulder of the '40s, the little cloche hat of the '20s, the slink of Hollywood in the '30s and an appreciation for the militaristic look of World War II. For a complete look at what fall 1978 has in store, read the fall fashion guide coming in Thursday's newspaper. (Staff photo by Stephen Cantrell)



MARION DANIEL

inside

THINK ABOUT IT

Or at least turn to page 10B and see what Observer staff members are thinking about. Fitz choice for lieutenant governor, Shakespeare, car buys, and the Equal Rights Amendment get a going over this week. Agree to disagree, if you choose.

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