

Condo conversion spurs battle

By JOHN BOZZO

The scheduled conversion to condominiums of huge numbers of apartment buildings could be stalled by a bill proposed by State Rep. John Bennett, D-Redford.

The bill would require a three-year time lapse between an application for a condominium conversion and actual approval of the project by the Department of Commerce.

In addition, a conversion permit would not be granted unless 50 percent of the existing tenants of the apartment building had made preliminary agreements to purchase a unit in the condominium conversion.

Developers would be required to give each tenant a notice of the planned conversion, with each tenant having the right to purchase a unit in the proposed condominium.

"Say a developer has built an apartment unit," Bennett said. "In 10 or 15 years they use up their tax shelter. The developer decides to sell the apartments as condominiums."

"It cost, maybe, \$10,000-12,000 to build those units as apartments," Bennett said. "They sell those units for \$50,000 as condominiums. It's profitable for them, but it's a kick in the teeth for people who use the apartment."

From July 1, 1978 through Nov. 1, 1979, there have been conversion applications from 84 different apartment complexes, totaling 5,735 units.

Conversion applications, which are submitted to the Michigan Department of Commerce, have included some from the following suburban communities: Redford Township — one application; Birmingham — six; Southfield — 11; Farmington Hills — two; Bloomfield Township — two; Westland — one; and Bloomfield Hills — one.

BENNETT'S INTEREST in the condominium conversion problem was sparked by last summer's controversial application from the owners of Villa Joy Apartments in Redford Township. An application requesting conversion of the apartments was made under the name Redford Villas.

Following notification of the conversion, angry residents jammed a Redford Township Board of Trustees meeting.

One requirement for conversion is an inspection by the local building inspector. Redford's building inspector listed a series of 11 alleged building code violations in a letter to Charles Snider, Villa Joy owner, and Dave Stewart, superintendent, at their Bloomfield Hills office.

Attempts to contact Snider or Stewart by phone and letter have been unsuccessful.

Despite the alleged violations, Villa Joy owners have satisfied Michigan Department of Commerce Condominium Development Section standards. Redford Villas was approved for sale Nov. 6.

Prices of the Redford Villas condominiums were listed, in their application to the Department of Commerce, as \$21,900-23,900.

"I have received many, many complaints," Bennett said. "Many of the complaints are bitter and from elderly people. These people tell me they don't have the money to buy a condominium unit where they live. They ask me where they are going to live."

"THIS IS A difficult problem, because we're decreasing the supply of apartments," Bennett said. "We're making it harder on young adults and older people to afford housing."

The House Urban Affairs Committee is now reviewing Bennett's bill. However, Bennett is taking no chances, he's working with Michigan Department of Commerce people to write another bill, incorporating suggestions from that department.

This bill (the original) would give us some time to study the problem," Bennett said.

Following is a list of the other local applications:

- Birmingham: Andrew Arms Condominiums 2; Muriel Arms; Birmingham Town Square; Pamela Place; and Concord Square.
- Southfield: Tiffany Square; Franklin Orchard Town Homes; Windsor Park; Twelve Pines; Walden Woods Condominiums; Eleven Oaks; Claymoor Condominiums; Meadow Grove Villa Townhouse; North Park Towers; North Park Place; North Park Square; and Southfield Townhouses.
- Farmington Hills: Beechwood Hill and Woodcreek Village.

Thursday, December 6, 1979

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Engineering whiz

Scott Moore (center), a student at North Farmington High School, displays the special award he received from Dr. Oliver Coleman (right), special project administrator at Lawrence Institute of Technology, for outstanding achievement on the National Engineering Aptitude Search Test. Also on hand to offer congratulations was high school principal Clayton Graham (left).

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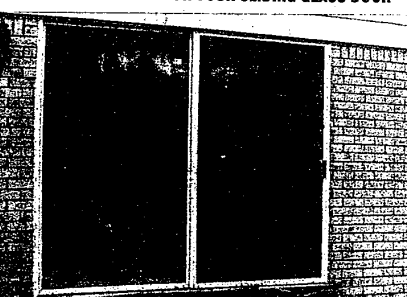
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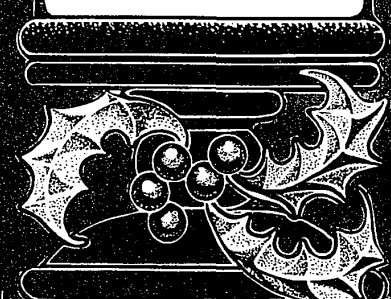
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