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Repair cost take toll in road fix-up plan

By Joanne Malazewski
staff writer

Increased costs and inflated bids have caused Farmington Hills city officials to drop three of four projects scheduled in the city's 1985 road safety improvement program.

"There's so much work (in the construction industry) so we're starting to see bids come in higher," said Tom Biaseil, director of the city's department of public services.

The only project that is expected to be completed under the safety improvement program this year will be the installation of a passing lane at 14 Mile and Inkster roads for a cost of \$30,795, Biaseil said.

In May council agreed to spend \$55,000 for improvements on four roads. Since that time, however, contractors presented bids for the four projects as high as an estimated \$129,000.

City engineers had estimated that the \$65,000 approved by council would cover all the projects.

"Because of these increased costs and the inflated bids, these projects were again reviewed in order to determine which, if any of these projects, must be built in order to protect the motorists from an impending serious road hazard," according to a report prepared by city engineer Dave Call.

The other three planned projects will be put on hold for the time being, Biaseil said.

"We're going to re-examine them when the (economic) climate is better," he said.

The remaining three projects are:

- Addition of acceleration, deceleration and passing lanes at 13 Mile, Edith and Mirion roads.
- Completion of a gap in the acceleration and deceleration lanes at 11 Mile and Kireleigh roads.
- Completion of the passing lane at 13 Mile and Oak Point Drive.

Changes in the design plans for the 13 Mile and 11 Mile road projects contributed to some of the increased costs of the safety improvement program.

County helps out on Orchard Lake

By Joanne Malazewski
staff writer

Thanks to Oakland County and the county road commission increasing their share of costs, Farmington Hills will pay less than expected to complete two road improvement projects later this summer.

Council recently authorized an agreement between the county, county road commission and the city to make \$147,000 worth of road improvements within the city.

The road program allows safety improvements to be made on county roads with project costs shared between city, county and road commission.

The projects, to begin sometime in August, include:

- The widening and installation of a left turn lane on Orchard Lake Road, from Oakland Community College-Orchard Ridge campus south.

• Installation of a left turn lane at Middlebelt and Kiltartan.

UNDER THE revised agreement, Farmington Hills will be responsible for almost \$69,000 of the project's total costs. Oakland County and the road commission will each pay \$39,070.

Last December when council agreed to enter the tri-party road agreement, the project was expected to cost approximately \$130,000.

At that time, only \$59,025 was available to be shared equally by the county, road commission and city. That meant the city would have had to pay approximately \$70,850 toward the road improvements.

This is the first time in several years that money will be distributed county-wide under the tri-party program. In recent years, the money that would have been allocated to local jurisdictions was diverted for improvements near the Silverdome in Pontiac.

THE INTERSECTION of 14 Mile and Inkster roads was chosen as the priority project because a signal is expected to be installed there and a passing lane consequently is required.

"This intersection had the most accidents of any proposed safety improvement and also had the most accidents that could be corrected by the proposed improvement," the report said.

Now he has a quite different view — car lights shining into his house, a gaping hole where a house used to stand in the next yard and a pool of water in his yard.

And despite his pleas to the city planning commission, the lights, the hole and the water persist.

According to Starrett, neighbors on his street and members of the Woodcreek Subdivision Association have labeled him an opportunist — someone who purchased the property specifically to make a financial killing. The Northwestern Highway corridor is a well-known commercial development strip in the metropolitan area.

Starrett said he feels much more victim than opportunist.

THE FIRST of the two problems began after construction of a building behind his property, for Stark and Co. by Sundance and Co.

In a Dec. 3 letter to Richard A. Lampl, Farmington Community development division manager, Starrett outlined his complaints.

In short, construction has changed the topography drastically.

The original topography of the Stark and Co.'s site included a hill and was 50 percent covered by large, mature trees, said Stark.

Hills boom means bust for resolute homeowner

By Lisa Birmon
staff writer

"How do I get the city to live up to their own zoning ordinance?" Dr. Edmund V. Starrett asked. "It looks like southern Lebanon over here."

Starrett, a Farmington Hills resident, moved to Woodcreek Farms, a lush, well-cared-for subdivision, two years ago from Dearborn.

In a residential area on the edge of a commercial zone, Starrett's home was blocked from Northwestern Highway by a heavily wooded area when he bought it along with seven-tenths of an acre on Wellington in Woodcreek Farms.

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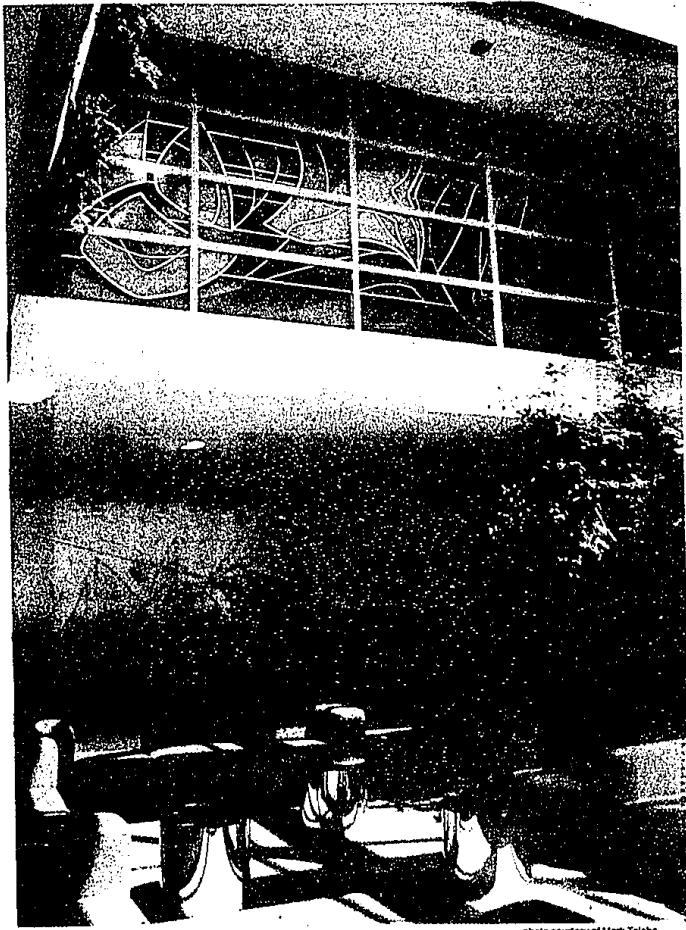


photo courtesy of Mark Talaba
Birmingham artist Mark Talaba's stained glass works are colorfully prominent at St. Mary's Hospital in Grand Rapids.

Touch of glass Rainbow of color makes art shine

By Michele Glance
staff writer

From teaching to writing to constructing personalized designs for clients, Birmingham artist Mark Talaba's career revolves around glass art.

From traditional church designs made of leaded and faceted glass to modular suspended sculptures, Talaba has constructed hundreds of creations all over Michigan.

He is designing a window for the Holy Spirit Lutheran Church, 4800 Orchard Lake Road, West Bloomfield.

The window will be titled "The Dove Descending," but only the head and wing of the dove will be visible.

"You'll only be able to see the head and the wing," Talaba said. "The rest is to be completed by your imagination."

"It's to express the idea that in religion there's a lot of things you believe in that you can't readily see," he said.

The window will also have words expressing qualities the Holy Spirit possesses such as kindness, peace, patience and generosity etched into the glass, Talaba said.

Colors in the window will range from blue to blue-purple to aqua to blue-green and finally pale yellow, he said.

"The farther away you get from the altar the darker the color will be," he explained.

stained-glass windows in the Embassy United Methodist Church in Birmingham.

But churches are not the only place Talaba does business. Many residences in the area, including about a dozen in West Bloomfield, have windows personally designed for them by Talaba.

"Originally, the people who were interested in stained glass wanted period pieces," Talaba said. "They were people who were interested in antiques."

"Very gradually there seems to be less people who are interested in stained glass and more people who are interested in architectural glass design," he said. "It's just beginning to develop."

Many of Talaba's clients choose to have an architectural glass design in their home because they realize it's an original work of art.

A CLIENT has to be willing to invest at least \$3,000 in a glass design before Talaba will consider taking on the project, he said.

"I try to estimate what kind of investment they want to make and then turn out an original, fine-quality work within that budget," he said.

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RANDY BOND/News photograph
Edmund Starrett stands next to the rubble which has put him at odds with officials at Farmington Hills city hall.

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