

Federal money earmarked for downtown

By Casey Hane
staff writer

Local merchants and city officials will get a helping hand in their move toward a major downtown revitalization from Farmington City Council.

Council members decided to channel federal funds in that direction after two public hearings on Dec. 16.

They voted to apply 64 percent of the expected \$48,000 of 1985-87 Community Block Grant Development (CDBG) money toward downtown development.

This follows a three-year plan approved for 1985-88.

Their move coordinates with plans of the Downtown Farmington Development Committee, a group of merchants and interested persons studying improvements for the central business district.

Congressional action will determine the amount of CDBG money each community receives, according to Farmington City Manager Robert Deadman.

COUNCIL ALSO authorized application to Oakland County for a possible \$250,000 in 1986 Commercial Assistance Program (CAP) money for low-income business loans, also subsidized through the federal CDBG program.

Money is awarded based on a specific project's merits. Farmington has specified its central business district as the target.

The CAP program is not selected last year as one of the eight primary CAP recipients because of a lack of a downtown organization, according to Robert Schultz, assistant to the city manager.

Unused program money was divided between those unselected communities.

Farmington was awarded \$10,830 in 1985, the program's first year. Because the city was not selected, it can reapply for 1986 money, he said. Five communities are expected to receive larger sums in 1986.

"The goals of the CAP program fit nicely with the goals of the downtown committee," according to a report prepared for the council by Schultz. The committee will meet in mid-January to hear a nine-month culmination of hired planners' suggestions for downtown Farmington.

THE CAP program in effect "buys down" a loan's interest rate, Schultz said. The loan subsidy guarantees an effective loan rate 5% percent below the Manufacturer's National Bank prime interest rate. Manufacturer's is contracted to handle CAP for the city.

Applications for CAP money will be reviewed by the downtown committee, or a subcommittee of that group, and will follow guidelines set by that group, Deadman said.

The project would have to "salvage the public aspect of a private building," Schultz said. "If it's bad, it hurts us all, and if it's good it helps us."

The money cannot be used for inventory, fixtures or interior decorating, he said.

Mayor William Hartsock voiced con-

cern about major corporations using the money when smaller businesses might have a greater need. "It should be for the people who need it the most," he said.

HARTSOCK ALSO noted a concern that business owners not borrow money for simple "cosmetic improvements" so buildings could be sold for a better price. In the event of a sale, the county loan would come due at the amortized amount, Schultz explained.

Primary use for CAP money would be for exterior facade improvement,

and "that should be kept in mind," Mayor Pro Tempore Alton Bennett added.

Farmington will approve the Oakland County CAP contract before Jan. 1, making the 1985 and potential 1986 money usable for 18 months, Schultz added. After 18 months, unused money is placed back in county coffers, where it will be redistributed.

"The county reserves the right to give more money if it likes the project," Schultz said. "It's in the county's best interest to spend it and spend it fast."

Sesquicentennial will be launched

An 1835 American flag will be hoisted above the Botford Inn in Farmington Hills Thursday, Jan. 2 — the kickoff to a year-long celebration of the historic inn's sesquicentennial.

Leading the 11 a.m. ceremony will be an honor guard from the Farmington Hills Police Department. Sgt. Martin Bledsoe will command the recently established police unit. The other officers are: Gary Mailoux, Donald Fredette, Gilbert Kohns and Brian DeGranne. A brass ensemble led by Paul Barber of the Farmington Community Band will also participate.

Originally a stagecoach stop on the Old Post Road (now Grand River) between Lansing and Detroit, the inn achieved prestige and notoriety when it was purchased by Henry Ford in 1924. Ford's zeal for historic preservation was demonstrated when he prevented the inn from being demolished during the widening of the road. Under his supervision, the inn was moved 300 feet back from the road and scrupulously renovated.

Purchased by the Anshut Hotels Co. in 1951, the inn has been managed by president John Anshut for 35 years.

While safeguarding the inn's authenticity as a national registered historic site, Anshut made 13 major additions to the original structure. It now has 11 meeting-banquet rooms and 75 lodging rooms, a restaurant, tennis courts and a large garden courtyard.

THE INN is well known for the antiques gracing the interior and its five wood-burning fireplaces. Many of the valuable furniture pieces were brought from Henry Ford's Fairlane Estate in Dearborn. Throughout the anniversary year, tours will be available to the public.

A book, "More Than a Tavern-150 Years of the Botford Inn," will be published in January. Well-known Farmington Hills historian Jean Fox has researched and written the book. She was aided by another Hills resident, John Lapham. A student at the University of Detroit, Lapham served as an intern through the Department of History. The book will be available to the public through the inn.

A calendar of anniversary events has been prepared for the public. For a copy, call the inn: 474-4800.

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