

To change or slow, that is growth question



Planning commission vice chairwoman Joanne Smith (left), commission chairman John Tráflet and city councilwoman Jean Fox were among Farmington Hills leaders Monday night taking part in a discussion about slowing growth.

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different than planned. We're too successful," city commissioner Philip Arnold said. "Now the thing is, how do you deal with the frustration of the people out there? Do you say, 'No, you can't develop... that's what slow growth is about'?"

FOX SUGGESTED taking another look at density requirements for the remaining parcels of undeveloped land in the city. Cluster housing was developed as an alternative to multiple-family. But Fox suggested that many apartments are showing vacancy signs.

City planning consultant Claude Coates, however, warned against changing ordinances to react to short-term economic slowdowns or changes.

The recently revised clustering ordinance now puts the burden on developers to show why they need maximum density, planning commission vice chairwoman Joanne Smith said.

Planning commissioner Law-

rence Lichtman suggested changing city growth rather than slowing it. It's not too late to change density requirements or to change the city's master land use plan, he said.

Planning commission chairman John Tráflet said commissioners are looking at remaining parcels to determine appropriate density under the ordinance, land conditions, traffic and other factors.

FARMINGTON HILLS' growth is considered part of the suburban westward development. As development continues westward into Novi, some parts of Farmington Hills may lose people, Blizman said.

"Maybe it's saving what we've got rather than trying to change it," he said.

Stockton resident Rosa Flum suggested that many of the future battles will be not with development but redevelopment.

"I would say that's probably the hardest challenge before you. Now you can correct your errors."

New lines drawn in day care battle

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Marks sees the one-vote defeat of SB 687 as a new opportunity to get the word out to mayors and city councils to lobby against the regulations when they are again reintroduced.

Faxon expects SB 687 to be reintroduced soon and to pass with little opposition. He intends to distribute to cities an analysis of the bill, studied by an independent Grand Rapids attorney. "Those who have studied the bill have concluded it is not harmful to cities," Faxon said.

The only ones who will be "adversely affected" by the bill are those cities that have prevented day care in residential areas, Faxon added.

But Marks disagrees. He maintains that Faxon's proposed regulations usurp local authority, particu-

larly in those communities such as Farmington Hills, which have allowed the smaller, six-children family day care homes in neighborhoods.

"The whole thrust is not against day care. It's against the circumvention of local authority. Obviously, we're not against day care. We've addressed it."

Marks plans to fight to protect the city's 1987 ordinance allowing state-licensed family day care homes for a maximum six children in residential areas. State-licensed group day care homes for a maximum 12 children are allowed only on major or secondary roads and not in neighborhoods.

THE COUNCIL of Homeowner Associations of Farmington Hills has joined Marks in opposing Faxon's proposed regulations. "We object to the state's infringement upon city home rule. We feel that the proposed

legislation will interfere with our city's local zoning regulations and take away the right of reasonable self-determination by the city of Farmington Hills," according to a letter to state senators and representatives.

The homeowners' council suggests that state legislation is not the "primary solution" for communities that have not addressed day care needs.

"We would propose that the (state) legislature, through the Senate, seek passage of a resolution encouraging all home-rule cities to enact reasonable local zoning ordinances to provide for child day care homes," according to the homeowners' council.

Faxon said "there's a considerable enhancement of local authority. The point is, you can't deny them over 1,500 feet."

Though Faxon said he expects some minor changes in the reintroduced bill, he expects the thrust will remain the same. Licensed or registered family day care homes would be considered a permitted residential use of property and not subject to special use or conditional permits.

GROUP DAY CARE homes, which require an additional employee to care for a maximum 12 children, would be issued a special or conditional use permit in a residential area if the home:

- Is not closer than 1,500 feet to another licensed day care home or other type of licensed care facility.
- Has appropriate fencing and the property is maintained consistent with visible neighborhood characteristics.
- Meets sign regulations.
- Meets regulations, if any, requiring a group day care operator to provide off-street parking accommodations for employees.

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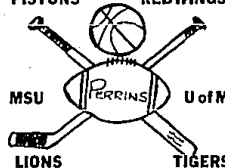
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