

Building Scene

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Marilyn Fitchett editor/591-2300

Monday, February 19, 1980 O&E

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Michael Horowitz heads The Selective Group, Farmington Hills, a major force in residential construction. Selective will build housing at Huntington Falls.

Developing a DREAM

By Doug Funke
staff writer

Three heavy hitters on the suburban development scene and the largest life insurance company in metro Detroit will team up to build what is believed to be the biggest single mixed-use project ever attempted in southeastern Michigan.

They call it Huntington Falls — 930 acres of what now is mostly vacant county land in the south-central part of Northville Township.

Over a 10-year period, the consortium plans to build:

- Upwards of 1,200 housing units including homes, condominiums and apartments.
- Recreational facilities including a Lee Trevino-designed, semi-public golf course, riding stables, tennis courts and pools.
- Several buildings along the site's southern perimeter for re-

search and development and light industrial use, a smattering of offices and commercial buildings like restaurants, specialty stores and convenience stores.

THE TEAM reads like a who's who in the development business.

R.A. DeMattia Co., headed by Robert A. DeMattia in Plymouth, will act as the managing partner. DeMattia has made a reputation developing and building technology/industrial parks.

The Selective Group, headed by Michael Horowitz in Farmington Hills, is a major force in residential construction. Selective also does commercial work.

Heritage Development Co., headed by Heinz Prechter in Southgate, specializes in construction of offices and light industrial buildings.

Prechter, an entrepreneur, also is a booster of economic development in Wayne County. He is also owner of a weekly newspaper chain and chair-



Robert A. DeMattia's R.A. DeMattia Co. in Plymouth will act as the managing partner for Huntington Falls. DeMattia has made

ize plans and obtain all necessary approvals and permits before work begins, according to DeMattia.

Part of the agreement between the consortium and the county executive's office calls for the purchase price of \$31.7 million to be paid within seven months after the county commission ratifies the deal.

DeMattia declined to discuss financing specifics.

"WE BELIEVE this is a unique opportunity to do a unique project," DeMattia said. "A project of this magnitude will be a challenge. The build-out cost of the project is \$1.5 billion. That's the total of everything when completed."

The development will extend east of Sheldon Road to Hines Park south of Brookline Golf Club. It is basically bounded on the other sides by Five Mile, Beck and Six Mile.

It will take at least a year to finalize plans and obtain all necessary approvals and permits before work begins, according to DeMattia.

Alexander Hamilton Life Insurance Co. in Farmington Hills, the largest in the metro area with assets of \$2.7 billion in 1978, according to Crain's Detroit Business, is a major financing partner.

charge of housing. Prechter will concentrate on marketing and finding tenants for the technology, industrial and office buildings.

"I personally put the team together. Gary (Roberts) and myself have spent thousands of hours putting this together, putting it into harmony with governmental units, nature, the market," DeMattia said.

Roberts is vice president for development at DeMattia.

Houses, condos and apartments will be built comparable to what's in the Northville community now, Horowitz said.

Houses could cost \$300,000-\$400,000, condos from \$200,000-\$500,000 and apartments rent at \$800-\$900 per month depending on the existing market, he said.

Those buildings had been part of the Wayne County Child Development Center.

Prechter has contacts in Japan, South Korea, Australia and West Germany through his auto supply business, said David Treadwell, managing director of Heritage Development.

GILL BRESLER/staff photographer

'Cowboy funk' gallops onto decorating scene

(AP) — Cowboy chic has hit home decor.

Bob Kapoun, a Sante Fe dealer in American Indian trade blankets, describes "Lonesome Dove" as the mini-series that made the boho tie respectable and the cowboy look collectible.

- What is the look?
- Picture Western "stick furniture" on display in a furniture showroom.
- Picture Pendleton blankets as curtains. Picture antler wall sconces.

Fascination for the West ranges from real cowboy gear to "cowboy funk," artifacts a la Hopalong Cassidy and Roy Rogers.

Cry Baby Ranch in Denver, one purveyor of cowboy kitsch, stocks chenille bedspreads with bucking broncos, covered wagon lamps and

pillows made from cowboy curtains.

"They're pieces people haven't seen since childhood and they've forgotten about it," said Roxanne Thurman, co-owner of the store that opened a year ago.

Bates Indian print cotton blankets that sold for \$2 to \$3 new, and cost around \$40 several years ago, Thurman says, sell for between \$125 and \$550 at the store.

At Old West Antiques and Cowboy Collectibles in Cody, Wyo., Brian and Diane Lebel have devoted a nook in the shop to cowboy funk. In the corner, ceramic cowboy boots support a lamp. A shiny horse clock sits on the shelf. Nearby stands a whip-attached lampshade with a color photo of Roy Roger's palomino Trigger.

TEN YEARS AGO, the shop's

Naugahyde chair with wagon wheel arms and saddle slung on the back would have looked like a white elephant. Today, there's a market for it.

"The stuff makes Lebel cringe, but some customers love it, she says. She manages the store while her husband travels to shows searching for both authentic and funky gear.

"I sell an awful lot of people one pair of spurs or one pair of chaps to hang on a wall," she said.

At the gift shop of the Gene Autry Western Heritage Museum in Los Angeles, the public is "crazy" for the cowboy look, according to Susan DeLand, merchandising director for the museum.

"It's the big new hot trend. Southwestern is really on its way

out," she said. "Pastel colors have sort of saturated the market and people are bored with it."

The museum carries inexpensive spurs for coffee table displays, Old West furniture, lamps, Pendleton and hide pillows and reproductions of Santa Fe Railroad china with a Western design.

"We've tested the waters and there's a tremendous interest in home decor with the Old West motif," DeLand says. Items range from authentic-looking to campier, trendier pieces.

At the Buffalo Bill Historical Center in Cody, Wyo., visitors are buying souvenirs in record quantities. "Our gift shops have doubled in sales in the last three years," says Everett Diehl, the museum's marketing di-

rector. In the last year and a half, the museum has added 20 different posters from the Wild West show era.

THE MARKET FOR serious western art is also rebounding. A Remington oil painting sold for nearly \$5 million at a Manhattan art auction in December. A Russell brought \$1.1 million.

"There's a new market out there that are buying. There are new players," said Billings, Mont., gallery owner Thomas Minckler. The last boom in the early 1980s was fueled by oil money, says Minckler, who describes his own business as "quietly and discreetly booming."

Cottage industries have popped up to cater to Old West decorating tastes.

One such business is Antler Creations, an Ennis company that designs antler wall sconces, coffee tables and chandeliers, using shed antlers of deer, elk and moose.

Lee Poole, owner of Hole in the Wall Galleries in Ennis and Big Sky, says he and his partner Don Ploite realized there was a market for the pieces and started the company within the last month or so.

Their first major project was an elk antler chandelier designed for the Huntley Lodge at Big Sky, which contains 12 sets of elk antlers.

Sometimes best deal is no deal

I was interested in buying a condominium unit up north and presented an offer to purchase. The seller agreed upon the price but was concerned about the fact that I had an inspection clause in the purchase agreement. There was also a contingency clause regarding obtaining financing. The seller's Realtor said that the seller would not go ahead with the deal if there were any contingencies. I feel badly because I wanted the unit. Do you have any advice?

ently had something to hide and you are best advised to go where you can have a fair and complete opportunity to inspect the premises before the agreement becomes binding.

I am thinking about buying an apartment and converting it to a condominium project. There are approximately 125 units. Do you have any suggestions that I should look to in considering the purchase of the apartment complex?

Obviously, you should be totally aware of the condition of the apartment premises before making your purchase. Get a history of the maintenance activities performed at the apartment complex and hire an architect or an engineer to inspect the premises to tell you what the useful life of the major component parts of the buildings will be. Also, consider how the apartment can be divided for purposes of condominiumizing the project, including how you will assign responsibility between the association and the co-owners for

condo queries



Robert M. Meisner

maintenance and repair responsibilities. Determine such things as whether there is a commonly metered electrical or gas facility, whether there is adequate parking to meet the anticipated needs of a condominium project, among other things. Also, be aware of the obligations which you will assume as a developer who is converting a condominium project.

I am thinking about developing a condominium in Macomb County, but am concerned about potential hazardous waste problems. Do you have any suggestions?

You should be concerned about the probability of mercury or other pollutants in the soil in certain areas of

that county. Obviously, discretion being the better part of valor, you should have a thorough environmental analysis made of the premises before you construct the condominium. Developers have an additional exposure to liability because of the environmental issues regarding soil contamination. Get yourself a proper consultant and expert and do your homework before you construct the condominium. Hopefully, you will have done your homework even before you buy the property so that you do not end up with a polluted red herring.

Robert M. Meisner is a Birmingham attorney specializing in condominiums, real estate and corporate law. You are invited to submit topics for this column by writing Robert M. Meisner, 30200 Telegraph Road, Suite 467, Birmingham 48010. This column provides general information and should not be construed as legal opinion.

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