

OBSERVATION POINT

How Should Suburbs Make Use Of Land?

By Philip H. Power
Publisher

The key issue here in the suburbs is how the land is going to be used.

Will it go for single family homes or apartment complexes? Will it be developed into a shopping center or will it remain natural, as a park? Is it needed for a new school or should it be made into a modern subdivision?

Choices in this area -- no matter how much politicians would like to pretend -- are not simple matters of the good guys in white hats from city hall gunning down the baddie developers.

Rather land use decisions bring to a focus all the complex strains and hopes that make life in the suburbs so challenging and full of excitement.

Is a community poor and lacking in tax base? A high tax generating shopping center might make sense. Is a community thickly settled, with few open spaces?

A park for the benefit of countless generations to come might be the best use of a parcel of land. Does a city wish to

attract citizens who will become involved in the affairs of their community? Then apartment complexes might be a poor idea.

THERE ARE NO simple answers, which is why decisions on land use are so fascinating.

A good case in point is now going on in Farmington Township, where the proposal to rezone 300 acres for a regional shopping center as large as Northland is now turning out sizable audiences at planning commission meetings.

Predictably, the subject has aroused emotions commensurate with the millions of dollars the HTK Corp. is thinking of putting into the project.

THE 300 acres currently is zoned for single-family dwellings, and the Township's master plan does not contain any provision for a regional shopping center.

These facts appear to suggest that the township ought to turn down the rezoning.

But it's not that simple.

The master plan is not a zoning ordinance which determines land use; rather, it is an attempt to make suggestions about land use, in light of attempts to make an overall plan for the development of the community.

When the master plan was put together (a process which started four years ago, with the plan passed last year) no one foresaw that a company would be willing to put millions of dollars into a regional shopping center development in the township.

But that has now happened. Further, it now appears that just to the west of the site there will be a main interchange at 13 Mile Road and the I-275 expressway. Do people who might want to buy homes in the area really want a busy intersection right in their back yard?

Location of the interchange may have made the present zoning no longer appropriate.

SOME HAVE argued that

more commercial development is just what the Township does not need.

But others point out that by concentrating heavy development into the center site, pressure to allow strip zoning along 13 Mile Road would be reduced.

And so the argument runs -- an argument that can be duplicated at zoning board after zoning board and planning commission after planning commission here in the suburbs.

THE REAL POINT in the matter is not that Farmington Township will or will not rezone the 300 acres.

Rather it is that plans made only a few years ago, based on the best information available at that time, are now out of date. And as a result, the whole difficult process of a community deciding what it really wants to do with its land is again under way.

Good luck, gentlemen of the Farmington Township Planning Commission. You'll need it.



Corrine Abatt writes

Hard Look Is A Must

Beverly Hills voters should take a long, hard look at the two road proposals on the March 8 ballot. Seldom have so many loud voices been heard in the quiet village on an election issue.

In the case of the 14 Mile and 13 Mile road improvements, most of the loud voices are against the road improvements--even, in fact, against putting them on the ballot in the first place.

Councilmen who voted to put the two proposals on the ballot have said they did so in order to give the voters a chance to express themselves on these two major issues. They replied that they had had calls from "residents" who wanted the roads put through.

Anyone who has even tried to pull out on to 13 Mile at peak traffic hours would not doubt that there would be some in favor of the widening.

Traffic controls would not speed the flow, rather slow it down. The village's share of the 13 Mile road widening from Greenfield to the west village limits will not exceed \$1,115,000.

EVEN STRONGER is the

outpouring of words against the 14 Mile proposal. The cost to the village for the paving, improvement and cutting through of 14 Mile from Greenfield to the west village limit is \$660,200.

The fact that has not been publicized is that there is a time limit on the agreement between Birmingham and Oakland County to put 14 Mile through from Southfield to Cranbrook (Evergreen) free of charge.

The offer expires in March of 1972 and in all probability will not be renewed. The Birmingham-County agreement is for two lanes, not four as is listed on the ballot proposal.

The fact that Birmingham wants 14 Mile through turns off some government officials and voters. Their chauvinistic attitude may have some justification. They want to protect the community from being bounded by slabs of concrete.

But with the predicted growth for the county in both people and cars, it seems possible that someday these roads will have to be improved and in that someday in the future, they will also have to be paid for--but at a higher price.

W.W. Edgar writes

Where Are Life Lines?

Years ago it was claimed that what America needed most was a good five cent cigar.

But no more.

What the country needs now -- and needs badly -- are permanent life lines on our streets and highways for the preservation of life and limb. Each year thousands of motorists lose their lives in collisions brought about by the failure to distinguish the faint yellow lines in the middle of the road or go off the side into soft earth or mud because the edge was indistinguishable.

Many of these lives could be spared if in some way the yellow line was made a permanent part of the road and not just painted from time to time.

The same is true with the white line along the edges, especially in the suburban areas.

In most cases in the suburbs there is an absence of street lights which adds to the difficulty. This is true in the spring when the rains soften the earth on the side of the road and make it a hazard for the straying motorist who,

unwittingly, leaves the highway.

Many are the areas where the rains have washed away the lines, not only marking the center of the road, but the lane markers as well.

WITH MAN'S INGENUITY that has brought about automation to take much of the drudgery out of work, surely there must be some method by which the yellow lines in the middle and the white life lines along the edges can be made permanent.

The white line especially would save the motorist from the dangers of the chuck holes and breakaways of the black top during the spring.

Michigan was the state that introduced the yellow line to the motorist. It was Michigan, too, that started the experiment with the white line.

It would only be fitting that Michigan be the first to make these lines permanent.

Goodness knows, the country needs them -- much more than it ever needed a five cent cigar.

Tim Richard writes

Cool Heads Are Needed

It's nice to see people with responsible jobs take their work seriously. Yet there is a point at which seriousness becomes self-centered fanaticism, a notion that one's own problems are more important than anyone else's.

We got more than one dose of that sort of intemperance last week when public school officials got the final details on their state aid.

HARRY HOWARD, the

Sense And Nonsense

True enough that Michigan Bell mailed pamphlets to every customer, explaining the new rate schedule. But it is also true that the new complicated bills, most of which arrived at households in the past few days, still have patrons confused.

It would make good sense to us if Michigan Bell sent out explanations in such simple language that none would be puzzled.

respectable superintendent of the Wayne Community School District, was speaking as a committee head for other administrators when he charged the public is being "misled" by Gov. Milliken's new budget.

The Milliken budget, Howard announced, was based on the assumption that local school districts would have to raise local property taxes.

The truth is somewhat less sensational. It wasn't Harry Howard, in a dramatic press conference, who was revealing something about the governor's budget message. What Howard was announcing had been revealed in the papers in the first stories on the budget. Careful readers knew it.

In short, you may disagree with the governor's proposals if you wish, but you're playing dirty politics when you charge he's "misleading" the public. Supt. Howard himself is guilty of misleading the public when he says the governor is "misleading" anyone.

NEXT COMES Rolland H. Upton, who is in his second year as Livonia superintendent.

Citing the state aid cuts in the current budget that have been approved by the governor and committees in the Legislature, Upton sounded more like a political candidate than an educator when he moaned:

"It is incredible that the state would make such a massive slash in its aid commitment to this district so late in the year . . . Now they're picking on us again."

To begin with, the "massive slash" amounts to three-fourths of one per cent. In the second place, the governor and his budget director have been warning the public about declining state revenues for three months.

One is forced to conclude either that (a) Upton was derelict in not preparing for aid cuts or (b) Upton is kidding us when he says the word from Lansing came late in the year.

THE INTEMPERATE, ungovernably fulminations of Messrs Howard and Upton are a marked contrast to the reaction of Richard Budd, M.D., superintendent of Northville State Hospital, where they have 1,000 mentally sick people.

Dr. Budd's reaction was a realization that the state constitution, approved by the voters, requires a balanced budget and that we all must tighten our belts when revenues get low.

That reaction, from a man caring for sick people, puts to shame the reactions of our public school administrators, whose responsibility is to people who are mentally and physically well.

Finally, let us recall who is really to blame for Michigan's sorry financial picture. It's not Bill Milliken. There was a 67-day strike against a giant industrial firm earlier this fiscal year, and the top dogs in that strike were GM's Jim Roche and the UAW's Leonard Woodcock.

Our crybaby school administrators' rhetoric would be better directed at the General Motors Building and Solidarity House.

DISSENT

View points expressed in DISSENT do not necessarily reflect those of Observer Newspapers, Inc., but are presented in the belief that publication of all segments of thought on a public issue is a prerequisite to understanding and progress.

By DAVID PLAWECKI
STATE SENATOR
12th DISTRICT

In the spirit of fairness I believe a few comments should be made on Walter Studley's recent observations in the Dissent.

Number 1, Mr. Studley criticized the appropriation of 45 million dollars of the uninsured motorists fund because of the State's financial crisis. The truth is this fund is being borrowed and will be repaid in five installments.

I wonder if Mr. Studley's alternative would be simply to cut 45 million dollars from needy areas such as Education.

Number 2, Mr. Studley criticized the \$2,000 raise the compensation committee gave the legislators. I wonder if he realizes that this is only a 6.3% annual increase for the legislators. Certainly not the greedy thievery he projects it to be, and also much less than most sectors of the private economy.

I think that the editor of Dissent should carefully consider his views before recklessly condemning. Probably my largest concern with such editorials is that they always seem to criticize actions without offering fair alternatives. This in fact seems to be doing the same thing that Mr. Studley is condemning in his opinion column.

Sense And Nonsense

Those groups and individuals who have been collecting Betty Crocker coupons toward the purchase of kidney machines and heart pumps may have wondered why General Mills set a deadline on the program. The word is out. The food firm said it made the decision because it was accused of "trading on human misery."

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