

Downtown from page 1A

to refurbish the outsides of their structures.

The DDA has budgeted \$237,222 for the first year (1994-95) of the plan, of which \$142,222 will go to operational costs. Those include promotional expenses as well as office, management and maintenance.

Promotional plans involve sponsoring events downtown, the expansion of the banner program, the holiday lighting program, TV co-op advertising, and billboard advertising.

This year, the DDA started a "Giving of the Green" promotion for St. Patrick's Day, involving 30 stores in the area. Also, a farmer's market is planned this spring for the Village Commons.

Business development will include recruiting brochures, sign and window-display workshops, grants and loans, and other small-business-related seminars.

'(The plan) represents a maturing of the DDA. It represents the general recognition of the factor that what makes a downtown function is more than what you build. It's people oriented.'

Robert Schultz
city manager

The DDA receives 85 percent of its money from a tax increment financing plan and the balance from a 2-mill tax levy from the DDA district. Money must only be used for public improvements.

New park benches, sidewalks, a pedestrian lighting system, and landscaping are some of the improvements made since the DDA formed in 1989.

There will be more. Other capital improvements include:

- Possible property acquisitions for business development and additional parking.
- Developing an entryway or

gateway image feature for the central district.

■ A sign program including both traffic and general information.

■ Eliminating power poles.

■ Repairing Farmington Road from Grand River to Slocum Street.

DDA officials believe capital improvements, as well as private investments, have contributed to an 11.5-percent increase in real property value and 16 new businesses in the downtown area.

"All these measures would indicate things are going along fairly well," Schultz said.



SHARON LEMIEUX/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Downtown ins and outs: Donovan's Country Store (right) is gone, but Oriental Gifts next door is an addition to downtown Farmington.

Plan comes too late to help Donovan's Country Store

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

One store won't benefit from the Downtown Development Authority's amended plan.

Donovan's Country Store, which sold imported Irish goods, closed April 5 after six years in downtown Farmington. The usual culprits are attributed to the small, family-owned business "hitting down: Poor economy and not enough time."

But location was also one of the

reasons, according to co-owner Ann Donovan.

"As far as any type of business in downtown Farmington, it's difficult," said Ann Donovan, who owned the store with her sister, Peggy. "You don't have people who come down and spend the day downtown."

"I don't have any regrets. I just wish the location was good for business. It's not."

Donovan's Country Store originally operated out of the Village Mall. They moved to Grand River

Avenue two years ago.

Customers came from as far as Canada to buy crystal, woolsens and teas made in Ireland. In the opinion of some it was the best Irish import store in the Detroit area.

A reputation as a fine specialty shop didn't translate into a high volume business. The Donovans said they grew tired of it.

"I loved what I was doing," said Ann Donovan, who lives in Farmington Hills. "If we'd been doing

anything else, we would've been out of business in a year."

Ann Donovan said she's not an expert at what it takes to revitalize downtowns. She's encouraged by the DDA's involvement in the past year, though.

Ann Donovan thinks the farmer's market planned for the Village Commons is a step in the right direction.

"(DDA director) Judy Downey offers a lot of hope," Ann Donovan said. "She has the best ideas

I've heard in years.

"Being down there six years, I've seen a lot of things and a lot of experiments. I know what's going to work, what's not going to work. Things that are not going to do it are things that promote 'free this' and 'free that.'"

Donovan thinks downtown needs a better mix of stores and a

drawing card. A farmer's market could bring people in for a day, she said.

More than that, she said the area needs to appeal to a wider group of shoppers.

"We need to get young people down there who want and need to spend money."

WalkAmerica comes to Hills

Part of the annual March of Dimes WalkAmerica benefit will take place in Farmington Hills on Sunday, April 25.

The start and finish of the 20-kilometer (just over 12 miles) walkathon will be the Orchard Ridge campus of Oakland Community College. Last year, about 1,200 walkers in Farmington Hills raised more than \$150,000 to support March of Dimes programs.

Walkers and volunteer helpers are needed for the Farmington Hills event. For information on how you or your company, club or

organization can support WalkAmerica, call Patti Rodzik at the March of Dimes office, 423-3200.

There will be benefit walks at 11 sites in the Detroit area on April 25. Some of the sponsors are: Fitness Factory, Pepsi, WKBD-TV, WHYT-FM, WJRM and Kmart.

Symphony does 'Bach to Future'

Group du jour, a Farmington Hills-based symphony orchestra conducted by Karen Nixon, will present "Bach to the Future!" at 7 p.m. Friday, April 23, at Dublin Hall in the Mercy Center, 11 Mile and Middlebelt roads, Farmington Hills. Selections from Dvorak's Symphony No. 9 ("From the

New World") and Holst's "The Planets" will be played.

Tickets at \$10 for adults and \$8 for students or seniors may be purchased at the door or in advance at Fox Formal Wear, 3832 12 Mile Road, Farmington Hills. Call 478-2075 for more information.

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Business open house

A business open house will be held 7-9 a.m. Thursday, April 22, at the Farmington Community Library, 32737 W. 12 Mile, Farmington Hills.

A continental breakfast will be served and computerized business resources will be demonstrated. For reservations, call 553-0300.

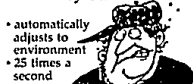
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EDDIE EDGAR ARENA
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- Using a MasterCard® or Visa®, access specialized information such as autos, estate sales and garage sales. Information is often available hours before the day's paper is printed.

Available soon:

- Beginning on April 25th you can receive a list of special Mother's Day buffets. Request item number 0426. \$3.50 per request.

O&E On-Line: 591-0903

- With a computer and modem you can log on to O&E On-Line, a computer bulletin board service (BBS). Here's some of the features you can access:
- Community events including all areas covered by the Observer & Eccentric® Newspapers.
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