

On camera

Businesses put criminals on film to stop thefts

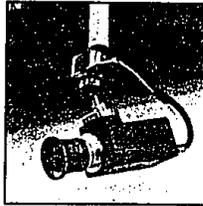
BY BILL COUTANT
STAFF WRITER

For many businesses, a security camera system is not just an investment in high-tech crime prevention; it's a necessity.

"We had a case where liquor came up missing from a storeroom," said Jim Hardesty, a camera specialist with Nighthawk Alarm Systems in Whitmore Lake. "They put in a hidden camera and found that an employee was stealing it a bottle at a time. At \$8 to \$10 a bottle, that can mount up pretty fast. He was caught and fired within two days. That was a good return on the investment."

For many retailers, such as department stores, party stores and gas stations, having a camera system saves much more than it costs almost on a weekly basis.

"I've probably been able to save about \$20,000 over the past year," said Jim Hardesty's brother, Steve, who owns the 7-Eleven store on Nine Mile and Middlebelt in Farmington Hills. Jim and Steve Hardesty gave



Another view: A small camera with a wide-angle lens is mounted behind the cashier.

business people a taste of the new, more efficient and less costly technology at the Business Watch Program at the Alexander Hamilton Insurance Building last week. Camera systems can be obvious, as are those at Steve's 7-Eleven; or they can use a 1/8-inch, wide-angle lens that can be hidden in a clock or a car's antenna.

"The first thing I see when I walk in my store is the camera to prevent stealing," Steve Hardesty said.

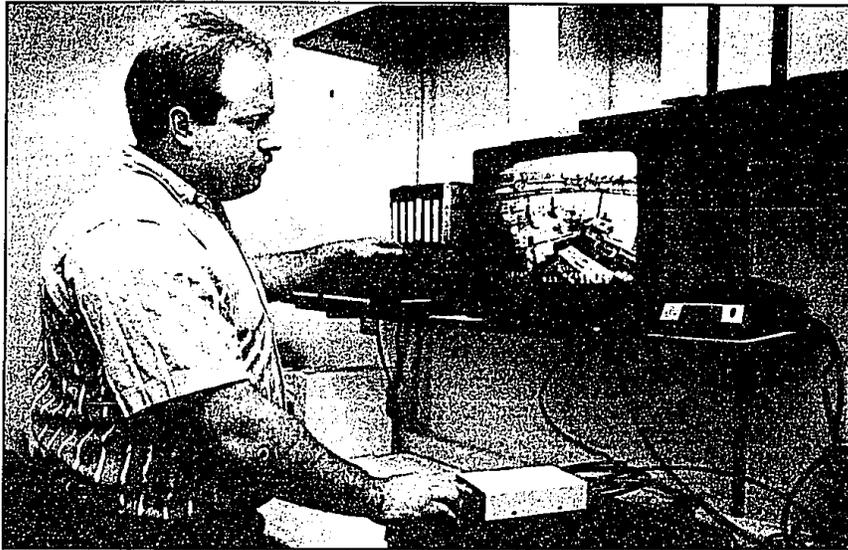
Some businesses will go a step further. They will use "dummy domes," camera mountings without cameras, along with working cameras so that potential thieves will not know which camera is on them at any given time.

Employees often take comfort in having a security camera operating.

"The cameras are important for security," said Merl Smith, a clerk at the 7-Eleven, "so long as they aren't listening to me."

Police say the cameras can be a deterrent.

"Convicted criminals will tell you that they'll avoid a place with cameras," said Jeff Anderson, a crime prevention specialist with the Farmington Hills Police.



STAFF PHOTO BY SHARON LEMIERRE

Watchful eye: Steve Hardesty monitors activity in his 7-Eleven store on Middlebelt Road in Farmington Hills

Regular, seemingly honest customers; vendors; and often a store's own employees are the very people stealing.

"Last summer, I went camping a lot," said Steve Hardesty. "We had a professional husband/wife team stealing from us. I suspected the husband because he was always asking about the camera system."

"The couple had been 'on the grid' from city to city, taking jobs in similar stores and stealing

thousands of dollars from their employers.

"We could only prove about \$100 on them because we only had a few incidents recorded," said Steve Hardesty.

That, along with the more sophisticated techniques of some thieves, has convinced owners to up their equipment capability, record more and review the videotapes regularly.

Thieves of all sizes and ages can "clean up," often leaving

businesses with no idea of why they are losing money.

"We had a 9-year-old son of a new bank vice president who came in with his father in the evening after the cleaning crew had left," said Jim Hardesty. "The bank had suspected the cleaners, but it was the kid."

Cameras can be instrumental in solving crimes. Often a holdup man comes in with a lookout who the clerk does not notice. But the

camera will record them coming in together and leaving together," Jim Hardesty said.

Camera systems are becoming cheaper, but they still run a range of less than \$1,000 to many thousands of dollars. Anderson said businesses often don't see the benefit because the systems are working.

"A lot of times, you don't really know what you've stopped," he said.



Looking down: A larger RCA camera is mounted on the ceiling, aimed at the bottle return cart below.

Farmington prioritizes street improvements

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

The road ahead for Farmington residents could get bumpy.

That's one reason major and local street improvements are top priorities in the city's Six-Year Capital Improvement Program. The report is put together annually by the Farmington Planning Commission in conjunction with the city administration.

The program was presented Monday to the city council, which uses the projections along with the administration to prepare the city budget and map out long-term strategy.

Said City Manager Frank Laubhoff, "This is a planning tool . . . looking at what the needs are in the future."

Major street improvement plans include:

■ Completion this summer of the second phase of widening Orchard Lake Road, which has a cost of \$1,460,000.

■ Traffic signal improvements for congested intersections such as Grand River and Drake and Eight Mile and Farmington roads. Estimated cost is \$75,000.

■ Proposed widening of Farmington Road from Eight Mile north to Grand River Avenue. Projected cost is \$800,000.

Money for major street improvements would come from a variety of sources, including Michigan gas, weight and value taxes and local Act 51 Highway Revenue Bonds.

The Oakland County Road Commission helps pay on a shared cost basis for repairs on

'We're assuming as the population continues to grow, it (the district court) will become a busier place . . . It would probably be wise of us at this point to plan that there is going to be a need for expansion.'

Frank Laubhoff
Farmington city manager

county roads. Federal and state highway grants are also available for such projects.

Local street improvement plans include:

■ Major repairs for Elizabeth Court, Twin Valley Street and St. Mary Court, which were constructed in the 1960s. Projected cost is \$175,000.

■ Improvements to Valley View Circle, which was built in the mid-'60s. Projected cost is \$235,000.

■ Replacing concrete slabs on streets within Bel-Aire Subdivision, which were constructed in the mid-'60s. Projected cost is \$350,000.

■ Major repair to the alley service drive in Floral Park Subdivision. The cost would be \$200,000.

■ Replacing roads in the Floral Park Subdivision, which were constructed in the 1950s and will more than likely need replacing by 1998. Projected cost is \$500,000.

Special assessments on property owners along with money from the general and local street funds would pay for residential street improvements. "We've looked at those streets. We know those streets are reach-

ing the end of their life expectancy," Laubhoff said. "In some cases, some of them have surpassed (their life expectancy) because of different problems that have existed."

Residents can either petition the council to have the city do the repairs.

Included in the six-year plan are ongoing improvements to the Central Business District, water mains, park system and city parking facilities.

Also under consideration is expansion of the 47th District Court. Officials say administrative offices and clerical space would be needed for an additional judge, which was approved by both Farmington Hills and Farmington city councils.

The state, though, has not OK'd a third judge as of yet, but could do so by 1998. The project would cost an estimated \$2 million and would have to be approved by voters in both cities.

"We're assuming as the population continues to grow, it will become a busier place," Laubhoff said. "It would probably be wise of us at this point to plan that there is going to be a need for expansion."

IT'S MAGIC

WHEN TWO

UNLIKELY FABRICS

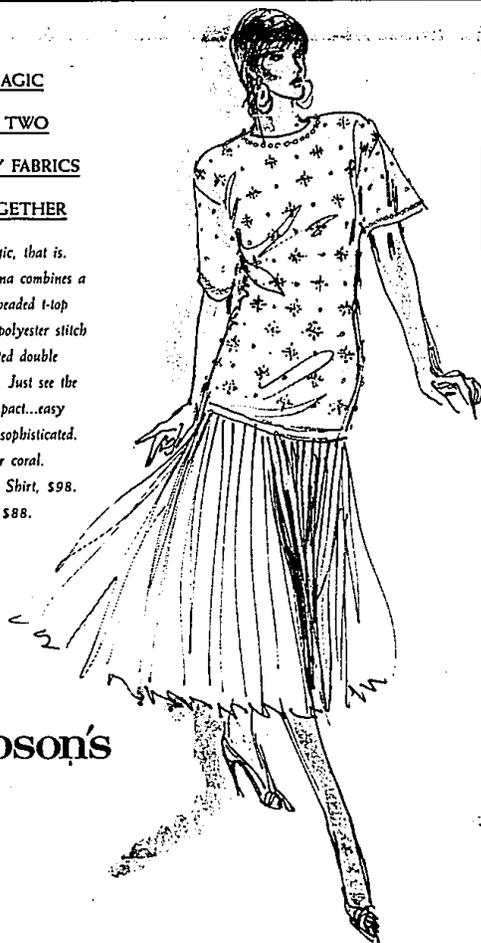
GET TOGETHER

Summer magic, that is, Marisa Christina combines a cotton knit beaded t-top with a breezy polyester stitch down pleated double georgette skirt. Just see the beautiful impact...easy dressing gone sophisticated.

White or coral.

Sizes S-M-L. Shirt, \$98.

Skirt, \$88.



Jacobson's

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Chastity advocate to speak at benefit for Right to Life

Molly Kelly, an author and advocate of chastity for young people, will be the featured speaker at a benefit Mother's Day dinner at 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, May 4, at Waldimir's on Grand River in Farmington Hills.

Kelly, the author of "Let's Talk to Teens About Chastity," has

appeared on ABC's "World News Tonight" and CBS' "This Morning."

The public is invited to attend the dinner, which benefits the Livonia-based Right to Life-Lifespans.

Reserved tickets are \$30 per person and \$200 for a reserved

table of eight, \$15 for clergy and people 18 and under. Reservation requests must be received before Wednesday, April 22.

For more information about the group, write Right to Life-Lifespans, 28200 Seven Mile Road, No. 127, Livonia 48152, or call 533-9090.