

POINTS OF VIEW

# Questioning the down side of development

A short eight years ago, I relocated my family to Farmington Hills. I also picked an office in Farmington Hills for the company to establish its branch office division.

At that time Farmington Hills was an ideal suburban location, offering good schools, a peaceful atmosphere, residential subdivisions with lots that had elbow room and enough shopping to find anything you needed within 19-15 minutes.

The city council seemed to be residentially orientated, with a long-range zoning district and master plan in place. This led one to believe the future of Farmington Hills would remain the ideal location to live and work in for years to come.

However, things seem to have changed quite a bit. On Aug. 15 at a city council meeting, the city manager stated that Farmington Hills is now the "largest city in Oakland County."

In the last few years, we have seen rampant development of commercial

space and residential housing with a significant density factor throughout Farmington Hills. Along with it, we are all suffering from worse traffic, more noise, pollution, crime and flooding.

Now on top of all this comes the proposal (PUD No. 3 1994, NCC-3) for a massive regional shopping center anchored by a 24-hour Kmart. This will be located at Orchard Lake, Northwestern and 14 Mile Road, already one of the county's worst bottlenecks.

Sized at 65 acres, 80 percent of it will be concrete and over 90 percent of this development will magically replace what is currently zoned and occupied as residential.

The negative impact will be horrendous to my family, business and the thousands of residents living and working within the one mile radius high-impact zone.

Gridlock-type congestion and inconvenience will affect the tens of thousands who must commute these inter-



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sections daily. All of this will greatly benefit only a few. It was stated at the planning commission study session on Aug. 25 that granting approval of this project would not be of much benefit to the city versus leaving it the way it is.

The residents of Farmington Hills need to ask themselves these questions:

- Why?

- How did all this happen?
- Why aren't these proposals discussed long before developers spend years planning, and unknown deals quietly made?
- Do we want to preserve Farmington Hills as a nice place to live or choke in our own development?
- Will our taxes go down, or just our property values go down from the influx of regional commercial development?
- When will it stop?

All of these questions make up the big question — Who has the real master plan? I believe the answer is: We the residents, the tax paying electorate.

However, if we do not stand up and tell our planning commission and city council what we want and expect of them, we can only blame ourselves when they go astray allowing overdevelopment.

Recently, some grass root organizations have formed to address these issues. They present homeowners and

residents viewpoints to the city council and planning commission. Two of them are Voters Voice and Home (Halt Overdevelopment, Maintain the Environment).

We the residents can easily and collectively express our concerns and viewpoints, (both new and old) to the city commissions. Simple support of these movements with petition signing, letters to the planning commission, and city council as well as attendance at commission meetings will help the City Council and their appointed commissions remember who voted them into their present positions.

Next meeting on proposal PUD No. 3 1994 NCC-3 is Sept. 20 at City Hall. They already know how to count your tax dollars. Let city council know that enough is enough.

Raymond J. Frederick is a manager in sales engineering for Nichimen America, Inc. on Northwestern Highway in Farmington Hills.

# Global approach good for economy and environment

The environment, once called a "women's issue", is now a mainstream, political concern.

Some good ol' boy politicians still grind their molars when steely-eyed, determined female zealots propel the movement to save the trees, the wetlands, wildlife, ozone layer, water system, soil and the air we breathe.

Pragmatic politicians, including a gaggle of them in Southfield, complain that environmental concerns impede development and, thus, the municipal economy. Many business types say the same.

But Alan Miller, a graduate of Seaholm High School in Birmingham, and co-author Curtis Moore take a new, global approach to the environment in their recently published book "Green Gold".

"The basis of the book," said Miller, "is that, in the past, environmental regulations were seen as a drag on business. But, increasingly, protecting the environment produces a cleaner, cheaper, more efficient product.

"This is good for the economy in a competitive market. We've fallen behind Germany and Japan, which have profited from strict environmental standards."

"Green Gold" contends it isn't a question of the economy or the environment. It's the economy and the environment. In Japan and Germany, environmental clean-up is seen as an economic harvest.

Miller is a maven on the subject. After graduating from Seaholm, he attended Cornell University, majoring in engineering and government. He interned in the Washington offices of the late Sen. Phil Hart and former U.S. Rep. Martha Griffiths.

At the University of Michigan, he earned his joint master's degree in law and public policy. He worked for the Environmental Law Institute in Washington.

Miller, on a Fulbright scholarship, spent a year in Sidney, Australia with his wife. He studied laws to help facilitate the use of solar energy, a zero-pol-



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luting energy source.

Then came a stint with the National Resources Defense Council. Miller did a 12-country comparison study on ozone depletion. He co-authored a government report with Moore.

Miller was a member of President Bill Clinton's transition team. He now teaches environmental law and is the director of the Center for Global Change at the University of Maryland.

"We do policy-oriented research on

global issues and define laws and programs for federal agencies," Miller said. "We study global ecology change and do technical research."

"Green Gold" is based on visits to Europe and Japan. Japan, for example, doesn't have a domestic environmental lobby or a Sierra Club equivalent. But environmental protection in Japan has evolved into a strategy for enhancing economic competitiveness.

The world is rapidly moving into a new technological area, a second Industrial Revolution, according to the book. Environmental protection, energy conservation and consumer demand are changing the way business is done throughout the world.

New light bulbs brighten rooms with 80 percent less energy and pollution than old ones. And they save money. Cars travel two or three times as fast on a gallon of gas. Electricity can be generated with no pollution and less cost.

Companies such as Dupont, IBM, and AT&T are getting the message and

implementing ways to make better, cleaner, more cost effective products, Miller said.

Beginning with the model year 1998, two percent of all new cars in California will be required to be zero-emitting vehicles producing no pollution, Miller said.

"Technology is on the verge of perfecting the electric, battery-operated vehicle," he said. "But there's a political side to the story."

"Detroit's Big Three carmakers are pressuring the White House to bar the adoption of California's standards in northeast states. They say the regulations are too costly. Are we betting on Germany and Japan to do it first?"

According to "Green Gold", America's leaders in Congress and in business fail to understand that what's at stake is the survival of the United States as an industrial power in the 21st century.

Jackie Klein, a Southfield city-watcher, writes a weekly column for the Eccentric.

# Keep power lines tense in home rule struggles

Fred Warner, a former Farmington Village president, was governor of Michigan in 1908-9, when the state adopted one of the great reforms of the 20th century — municipal home rule.

Local governments are creatures of the state and have only the powers the state gives them. Across the U.S. in the 19th century, however, state legislators had abused their control. Cities demanded home rule so they could experiment with new forms of governance, such as city managers, at-large councils, nonpartisan elections, appointed clerks and treasurers, higher taxing and bonding authority, and so on.

Yet the tension between state and cities continues. Covering the school reform action of 1993-4, I had to bypass a few good stories about home rule. Let's catch up:

**DAY CARE** — The Senate passed SB 162, sponsored by Sen. Jack Faxon, D-Farmington Hills, which limits cities' abilities to zone out day-care centers. The Michigan Municipal League, composed of cities and villages, is battling it because "In its present form, the bill amends the City and Village Zoning Act to allow a day care facility with up to six children to locate in any residential zone."

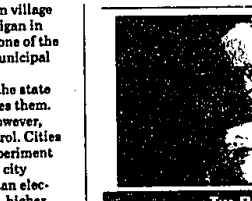
"Snob zoning is a fairly familiar abuse of home rule powers, particularly in newer suburbs. At MML's request, Rep. Jan Dolan, R-Farmington Hills, a former mayor, will offer an amendment exempting "a city or village whose zoning ordinance makes a good faith inclusionary provision for family day care homes and group day care homes in all residential zones."

Many lawmakers distrust the vagueness of the Dolan amendment. What is "good faith"? We should see a dandy floor fight during the House's fall session.

**RESIDENCY** — Senate Bill 879 would prohibit cities from requiring that police and fire personnel live within their boundaries. It is sponsored by Sen. David Honigman of West Bloomfield.

Honigman's purpose is not "Detroit bashing." He sees the restrictions as out of date, disrupting the homes of married couples who both work but in different jurisdictions. He plans to report the bill out of the Labor Committee this fall.

MML promises "to vigorously oppose the



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bill." It will be a fight. Rep. Lyn Bankes, R-Redford, has introduced an identical measure, HB 4650, in the House, and it has gone nowhere.

**POWER LINES** — Senate Bills 814-821 would allow the state Public Service Commission to designate when a high-voltage power line is a public necessity. PSC would issue a "certificate of public convenience and necessity."

MML objects: "This certificate renders all local zoning ordinances along the proposed power line unenforceable."

Sen. John Schwarz, R-Battle Creek, sponsored the bills after Consumers Power Co. lost a court battle to extend power lines into Indiana. The utility said a single township stymied the project by objecting to a small portion of the entire line passing through its jurisdiction.

Michigan runs into such problems constantly. Should a single local unit be able to stymie a power line? a landfill? a boat launch? a hiking trail? a prison?

These local-state struggles are constant, and they are necessary — Just like the struggles between police powers and defendants' rights, between labor unions and management, between individuals and the collective will.

If this newspaper is still publishing 100 years from now, my successor will be writing about these tensions. That is good. If one side ever entirely wins, the other may explode.

Tim Richard reports on the local implications of state and regional events. His Touch-Tone voice mail number is (313) 953-3047, ext. 1881.

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