

# Farmington Observer

K-A8

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SEVENTY-FIVE CENTS

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## IN THE PAPER TODAY

**Making ready: Mighty are the preparations for the second-annual Cornucopia Ball in Farmington Hills. /A3**

**Once more in Walled Lake: School officials are pushing a bond issue. /A3**

## TASTE

**Cool cookies: Making cookies is fun, even in the summer. Don't let the heat wilt your interest in baking. /1B**

**Taste Buds: No sweat dishes, made with items from your pantry, satisfy on hot days. /1B**

## SPECIAL SECTION

**It's Festival time! A special section in today's Farmington Observer marks the 32nd-annual Farmington Founders Festival, which takes place this week in downtown Farmington and environs. Let this booklet be your guide to Festival events.**

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## Festival 'ear' and dear to folks



Can it be July already? The Farmington Founders Festival, that old standby of small-town merrymaking, will take place this week. It's a boon to most businesses, but one's closing down for the duration.

BY LARRY O'CONNOR  
STAFF WRITER

Sometimes elephant ears have to take precedence over trims around the ears. Then again, food, fun and music have always been the main attraction at the annual Farmington Founders Festival, which dominates downtown this week.

While restaurants and other downtown Farmington businesses expect an overflow of customers to pour through their doors, one plans to shut theirs.

Korner Barber Shop in the hub of Farmington will be closed Friday and Saturday, July 12-13.

"We don't have hardly any busi-

nesses. Several shops have already closed for the week. The parade and they block off the street. So that shuts us down.

This year we threw in the Friday ... We thought it would make a nice four-day weekend (The shop is closed on Sundays and Mondays).

Retailers are counting on more of a customer boom rather than Mother Nature's boom this year.

Sizzling heat and virulent thunderstorms, which knocked out power, kept people away from last year's festival. Festival business was down 30 to 40 percent, according to some business owners.

"We have prayed to the weather gods and asked for cooler weather and with no storms that knock out power," said Jody Soronen, director of the Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce, which sponsors the event.

"The economy is doing well. We hope businesses are able to take advantage of the fact there will be more people downtown, and put their best foot forward and put out their classy merchandise.

Many downtown shops are destination stores. An influx of visitors

See FESTIVAL, A2

### Mercury at the mall



Grabos' deal: Robert Grabos, leasing specialist at Bob Dussseau Lincoln-Mercury on Grand River in Farmington, looks over the Uptown Plaza parking lot, which is storage for unsold new autos. The arrangement, which seems to be a win-win situation for the mall and the dealership, goes before the planning commission tonight.

STAFF PHOTO BY DOMINIC CEFARANT

## Code proposed for empty stores

BY LARRY O'CONNOR  
STAFF WRITER

Farmington city officials want a new ordinance to send a message to business property owners: Empty need not mean dumpty.

Some would use the latter to describe some unkempt vacant store fronts in the city. A new ordinance under consideration would require building owners remove existing business signs and that windows be maintained.

Farmington City Council has yet to adopt the ordinance, but members like the intent.

An owner of the downtown's largest retail outlet center also thinks the proposed mandate would be a good one.

"I don't have a problem with it," said Nadine Rafferty of Kimco Realty, which owns the Downtown Center. "Normally, you should be cleaning up the interior of the store to make it presentable."

The ordinance would require window decorations and displays be removed.

Semitransparent material has to be used to cover windows, eliminating use of other materials such as brown or white paper.

Window signs advertising vacancies are still allowed.

All interior portable furnishings and fixtures have to be removed or placed out of sight.

If a sign is removed, the building owner has to make sure no electrical wires are exposed or the color of the facade is not altered.

Vacancies are a reality in today's volatile retail economy. Cities need to have some uniformity in dealing with them, a city official said.

Untidy vacant storefronts are an eye sore and are targets for vandalism, they added.

"In general, this ordinance will give us the look we want downtown," City Manager Frank Lauboff said, "and that look doesn't include blight."

Council will consider adopting the ordinance at its Aug. 5 meeting.

If the proposal passes, letters and a copy of the ordinance would be mailed to property owners, giving them 30 days to bring any vacancies up to code.

Those who refuse to comply could be ticketed. Civil fines start at \$25 and \$125, "and go up from there," Lauboff said.

City officials don't expect problems with a majority of property owners, though. The ordinance is partly aimed at absentee landlords, who don't take care of their property, Lauboff said.

What the ordinance calls for is common sense, especially taking down the sign of the previous tenant, said Kimco's Nadine Rafferty.

"The problem is when there's still a sign over it, people don't think it's vacant," Rafferty said.

## Dealership stays parked in Farmington

BY LARRY O'CONNOR  
STAFF WRITER

In the 1980s, Grand River in Farmington was the car corridor. A place with an eye for an auto could find the avenue for Buicks, Hondas, Chevys, and even Jags. A 1985 Chevrolet two-door sedan was advertised for a monthly \$125 at East View Oldsmobile.

3334 Grand River. One by one, though, dealerships pulled out.

Bob Dussseau Lincoln-Mercury on Grand River and Orchard Lake has remained since the '80s but is faced with a 1990s sort of problem: Not enough room for inventory, which has expanded because of the trend of leasing vehicles rather than buying them.

The Farmington Planning Commission will decide tonight whether to OK a long-term solution. Commission members are considering whether to grant a special exception permit to allow Dussseau to park vehicles across at Uptown Plaza.

Cars would have to be parked in the middle of the lot, away from existing businesses. The area

would be for storage only and could not be used for sales, City Manager Frank Lauboff said.

"Obviously we don't want to see them to move from the city if we can do anything about it," Lauboff said.

The longtime Lincoln-Mercury dealership had used the south end

See BUSINESS, A3

## She's strong on redevelopment

BY WILLIAM COUTANT  
STAFF WRITER

For Farmington Hills Councilwoman Massie Kurzeja, redevelopment the city is going to be a priority for a long time.

Kurzeja, a longtime resident of the city's Old Town area, is running against Jerry Ellis in the Aug. 6 special city council election to finish the term of Aldo Vagnozzi, who was elected mayor last fall.

### COUNCIL RACE

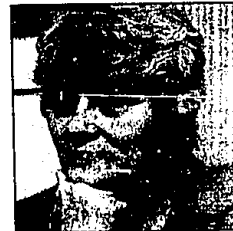
Kurzeja, who served on the zoning board of appeals before being appointed to serve in Vagnozzi's stead, said there have been a lot of overdue improvements to the Grand River Corridor in the city.

"It was dying," she said. The addition of the Target store and the shopping center it anchors

have improved the area, she said. A new Pep Boys automotive center, the Enterprise Rent-A-Car national headquarters and improvements that include tearing down the Tip Top Motel have also helped the area.

"And we think there will be a McDonald's coming in," she said. Kurzeja, 59, has lived in the city for 35 years. She attended Madonna University, taking business courses

See KURZEJA, A2



Massie Kurzeja

### More candidate nights

Attention, Farmington-area voters: You have two more opportunities to meet the candidates for the 37th District State House and the Farmington Hills City Council.

The Farmington Area Republican Club will sponsor a candidates' night Wednesday, July 10, in the council chamber of the Hills City Hall, 11 Mile and Orchard Lake roads.

Council candidates Massie Kurzeja and Jerry Ellis will field questions from panelists beginning at 6:30 p.m. At 8 p.m., same location, County House candidates Terry Geyer, Cathy Webb, Andy Barankovsk and Linda Jolicœur will face panelists' questions.

Both sessions will be cablecast live on Time Warner Channel 8. The cablecasts will be

### FARMINGTON FOCUS

repeated at later dates.

Council candidates Kurzeja and Ellis will participate in a candidate sponsored by the Council of Homeowner Associations at 7 p.m. Tuesday, July 16, at the Hills City Hall.

Both races will be settled in the Aug. 6 primary.

### FFIA fund-raiser at Festival

Dr. John Cromwell of Cromwell Family Chiropractic in Farmington will operate a soft drink and juice booth on Grand River during

the upcoming Farmington Founders Festival, July 9-13.

Proceeds from the booth, located in front of Cromwell's office across Grand River from the Village shoe Inn and Dimitri's restaurant, will support Farmington Families in Action, a local anti-substance abuse program.

Free spinal screenings and consultations also will be offered. For more information, call Cromwell at 477-1492.

Items for Farmington Focus may be mailed to the Farmington Observer, 3341 Grand River, Farmington 48335; faxed to 477-8722; or dropped off at the newspaper office. For the computer literate, the Internet E-mail address: packy@oonline.com.