

# New city post office opens

Customers say they like offerings at user-friendly postal store

By LARRY O'CONNOR  
STAFF WRITER

A new downtown postal store is getting the stamp approval from customers.

Farmington Post Office moved its customer operations from Slocum Street to a state-of-the-art postal store in the Downtown Center on Grand River and Farmington roads.

The store opened Monday. A yet-to-be-announced grand opening is expected take place in the next couple of weeks.

"It's a little different than we're used to," said Susan Anchoff, Farmington Hills resident making her first visit Tuesday. "This might be the post office of the 21st Century."

Added Matilda Sewell of

Farmington: "It's real nice. It will alleviate standing in line behind someone with a bunch of packages when all you want is a stamp."

Inside doesn't resemble the standard post office. Shelves are stocked with stationery, prepackaged stamp sheets, collector kits and other philatelic items. A vending machine dispenses stamps in quantities of one to 50 and several different denominations.

A scale allows customers to weigh domestic packages up to a pound so they can apply the proper postage and mail them without standing in line.

Clerks are available at a counter for those who need to send packages overseas or special delivery. The facility also houses 850 postal boxes.

"It's much more user-friendly," said Marlene Bowers, newly-named Farmington postmaster. "Postal retail stores are extremely successful."

Hours are 7 a.m. to 5 p.m., though that could change. Postal officials are seeking input from customers on what would be more convenient, Bowers said.

"It's the not the post office; it's a retail store," Bowers said. "Customers decide when it will be open."

Many of the clerks are new, especially trained to handle retail store operations. Mail carrier operations still take place at the Slocum Street post office. Those operations will be moved to a carrier annex on Indoplex in Farmington Hills by the fall, Bowers said. Residents will still pick up packages left for them at the Slocum Street office. On Monday, a line of people were making the trek from Slocum Street to the new store



STAFF PHOTO BY BRIAN MITCHELL

**Fewer lines:** Officials promise the new postal retail store will be much more user-friendly, with plenty of self-serve items and even a chance for customers to help set the operation's times.

— next to Big Apple Bagel in the Downtown Center. Monday was a "soft" opening to offer postal workers time to work out any bugs in the new facility, Bowers said.

A ceremony to celebrate the grand opening will also include swearing in Bowers as the new postmaster. She arrives from

Greenville, S.C. where her main emphasis was customer service. The office she worked out of received the highest customer satisfaction rating in upstate South Carolina.

Bowers plans to bring that customer satisfaction north. "That store is the first stop," Bowers said.

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**The Farmington Observer**

**Grand Opening**

**Butterfly, bird garden set for city park**

By GARY WOBONCHAK  
STAFF WRITER

A garden designed to specifically attract butterflies and hummingbirds will be set up this spring in Shiawassee Park.

The Farmington City Council approved a \$500 expenditure for the butterfly-hummingbird garden at its meeting on Monday.

The city's Public Services Department will begin planting in May, according to City Manager Frank Lauhoff.

"For those who spend their time in the park leisurely, or for school groups, I think they'll find it a pleasant place to be," said Lauhoff. "It will be an enhancement to the park."

Lauhoff made the proposal for the garden with the help of Farmington Hills naturalist Joe Derek. Along with providing the design and list of plants for the garden, Derek gave council members a slide presentation to show them the types of butterflies that could be expected.

Derek suggested zinnia, cosmos, funnel, parsley, dill and bee balm be planted from seeds. Native plants such as milkweed, nettle and thistle can be obtained from resident's yards or from mowed right-of-ways, with permission. Also suggested was Joe-pye-weed, purple coneflower and the butterfly bush (buddleia).

The garden will be located south of the Rouge River, across from the tennis courts. It will be 12 feet by 20 feet, surrounded with a split rail fence. A four-foot wide walking path will run down the 20-foot length of the garden.

Lauhoff told council members that Shiawassee Park is a perfect place to enjoy the city's natural beauty.

"Most of the funds expended on park improvements have been for sports or other similar outdoor recreation," he said. "It is also important to maintain passive activity areas for the community to enjoy."

"A garden in this area of the park will provide a very tranquil setting that will be enjoyed by both young and old alike," he added.

The city's involvement will be mainly in building and planting the garden, since it will require little maintenance, according to Lauhoff.

However, even the minimal maintenance required must be provided for, he said. As such, the council is looking for a community group or groups to volunteer some time to provide upkeep for the new attraction on an annual basis.

Lauhoff invited any parties interested in volunteering to call his office at 474-5500, ext. 221.

The volunteers' role would probably consist of going to the garden twice in a summer to maintain things, he said.

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