

Multi-screen theater readies for showtime in 14 Mile-Haggerty area

BY JENNIFER PLACINTO
STAFF WRITER

The curtain will rise at the new 14-screen United Artists movie theater next January, crowning the development of the northwest corner of 14 Mile and Haggerty in Commerce Township.

Since last spring, the site has changed from being a primarily vacant and residential area to a widely patronized shopping complex containing a Home Depot, PetsMart and the newly opened Applebee's restaurant. The new additions joined McDonald's restaurant and Target.

"The lack of other restaurants in the area and a need for our services," is what prompted Applebee's to locate at 465 Haggerty Road in Commerce, said Jim Dalton, the store's general manager.

Open since Sept. 29, the restaurant has been busy every afternoon and evening with the wait for seating in excess of a half hour, Dalton said.

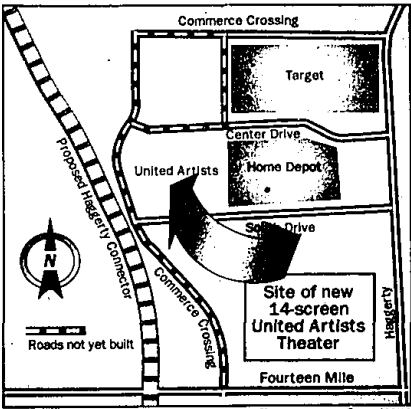
He credits the atmosphere and prices for attracting the crowds.

"The decor we provide is what I consider really appropriate to many different people," Dalton said. "With that, we provide a good menu."

"Everything on the menu is under \$10," Dalton said. "A family of four can have dinner and drinks at a reasonable price. That's something you don't see very often."

"We need some greater restaurant services in the area and this will help out," township planning director Bill Brownfield said of Applebee's.

Applebee's is open from 11 a.m. to midnight Mondays through Thursdays, 11 a.m. to 1 a.m. Fridays and Saturdays and 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. Sundays. The restaurant, which also provides take-out, does not take reservations.



HELEN FUNCKEN/STAFF ARTIST

tions.

Despite the additions, Brownfield said, traffic in the area isn't expected to get any worse.

"It won't affect the traffic at all," he said. "The traffic is already bumper to bumper."

While the Haggerty Connector is expected eventually to slice a path behind the shopping complex relieving some of the congestion, it is unknown when the 4-to-6 lane boulevard roadway will be constructed north of 14 Mile Road.

In the meantime, property owners are working on an access roadway of their own as they prepare to fill the \$7 million theater, which contains stadium-style seats set on tiers to allow unobstructed viewing.

Commerce Crossing Road, which is located just north of

Target and intersects Haggerty Road with a traffic light, is being converted into a boulevard. That roadway is expected to loop around behind Target and the theater south to 14 Mile.

"We hope it will come up to 15 Mile to be parallel to the (Haggerty) Connector," Brownfield said of the proposed north/south Commerce Crossing.

Since the area, just north of the site and west of Haggerty, is all wetlands, property owners are working with the state Department of Environmental Quality for wetland mitigation purposes, Brownfield said.

Two undeveloped parcels remain on the site, just north of United Artist and south of Target. Brownfield said he would like to see these sites filled with office/research facilities.

Police search for leads in Big Boy armed robbery

BY TIM SMITH
STAFF WRITER

The Farmington Public Safety Department is still without leads in late Sunday night's armed robbery at the Big Boy restaurant at 20788 Farmington Road. An undisclosed amount of money was stolen. No injuries were reported.

But it could have been much worse. According to Scott Herrmann, detective for the public safety department, one of three ski-mask-wearing intruders ordered an employee - who was acting as manager as the restaurant prepared to close for the night - to open the safe.

"He stuck a rifle into the small of the (employee's) back and forced him to (open) the safe," Herrmann said Tuesday. He could not describe the weapon, other than to say it included a scope.

That employee was then taken to a nearby walk-in freezer, joining five other employees who were put there by the suspects.

After waiting about 15 minutes, to make sure

the men had left the restaurant, located near Farmington and Eight Mile roads, the locked up employees kicked open the freezer door and got out unharmed, said Farmington Public Safety Cmdr. Maria Putt. None of the restaurant employees needed medical treatment.

"They kicked themselves out of the freezer and then called us," Putt said.

Herrmann and Putt noted that the armed robbery was the first in the city of Farmington since early this year.

All three of the suspects were described as "small framed black males," Herrmann said. Two of the men were wearing black ski masks; the third was wearing a blue-green ski mask.

Putt said the restaurant was empty of customers at the time of the robbery, an indication that the men had waited outside before making their move. "Nobody saw them in the parking lot. Nobody saw a car," Putt said.

Gunman 'pops' in to hold up gas station

Farmington Hills police are investigating an armed robbery at a gas station on Grand River near Haggerty Monday night.

At 11:50 p.m., a man went to the counter at the Shell gas station and handed the cashier a \$1 bill for a bottle of pop.

He then pulled out a small black handgun and reached over the counter and pushed a key to open the register. After pulling out the register drawer, the man took the cash - believed to be \$191 - and left.

The cashier, a 21-year-old woman, screamed and was told to be quiet by the robber, who was described as soft-spoken and calm in the police reports.

He left on foot and walked around the corner and headed north.

He is described as a black male in his mid-20s and 6-feet tall with a moustache.

He was wearing a black baseball cap, black jacket, jeans and white sneakers. A store surveillance video indicates the jacket had a white stripe on the back.

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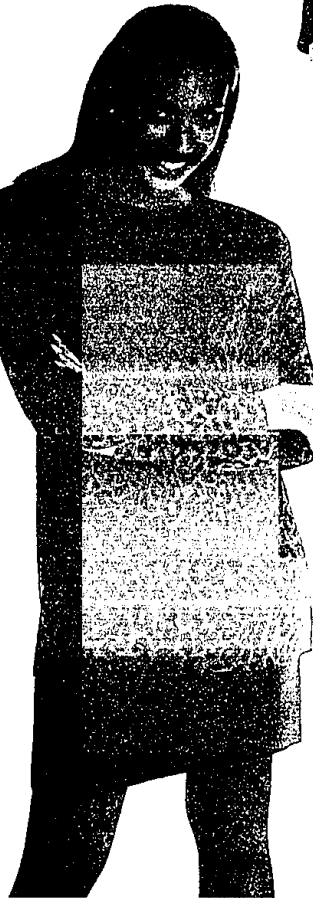
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