

Cracking down

There's no excuse for blight

Nothing can damage a community's spirit faster than a disregard for maintenance and upkeep.

If an area doesn't look nice, people avoid it. That can start the ball in motion for doom in a retail area.

Farmington officials are right on target with their decision to crack down on property owners who have allowed buildings and grounds to fall into disrepair.

The city's first assault - with the blight ordinance in hand - will be on businesses on the eastern side in the Grand River-Orchard Lake area.

Take a look at that area. The condition of some of the storefronts on the eastside of Mooney Street is abhorrent and should be embarrassing to property owners. Weeds are overgrown, giving the area an abandoned appearance. So who would want to do business in the area?

Residents have complained, as they should. And they are right. It's a shame that weeds are overgrown, fences are dilapidated and storefronts are in disrepair, particularly those that are empty. There is no excuse for property owners to allow their properties to fall to shambles.

It is a shame that property owners have so little pride in what they own. More importantly, they need a lesson on what such disrepair does to remaining businesses. The former Cattleman's restaurant, for example, helps the Uptown Farmington Plaza look like a ghost town.

While city officials and residents remain concerned about the closed Farmer Jack in the Downtown Farmington Center, they share

similar concern with other parts of the city where businesses remain vacant. As of yet, the former Farmer Jack store is at least not yet in disrepair.

Blight, both with businesses and property, has a domino effect on adjoining businesses and residences. The disrepair creates a negative feeling with shoppers, as well as potential new retailers who may be searching for a place to call home.

We urge the building inspector to be tough and to demand that each building and piece of property be maintained at high standards, as required by the ordinance. Business owners must recognize that the crackdown will not just affect the older buildings, the vacant buildings or just the property owned by absent landlords. Every business and property - throughout the city - will be scrutinized, as they must.

Open store owners believe that if the interior of their establishment is attractive and inviting they will attract customers and will expect return business. But if the exterior, including the grounds, Dumpsters, fences and parking lots are not attractive, shoppers won't even make it to the front door of a shop.

Blight, disrepair of buildings and adjoining structures, as well as the grounds, only serves to bring a cloud of doom to a retail area. Blight is like cancer. All it takes is a seed. At first it spreads slowly and quietly and then in one fell swoop causes fatal damage.

The city is right to crack down on growing blight. Property owners would be wise to heed the building inspector to the punch and begin immediately to improve their properties - for their own good and the health of the city.

Let's recognize all workers

A couple of years ago on Labor Day, we noted how major corporations were playing down the contributions of their workers.

They quit showing employment figures on page 2 of their annual reports and hid them on page 57, almost as an afterthought.

They stepped featuring photos of workers and concentrated instead on pictures of the products. The old notion of a company being a three-legged stool - with management and customers being the other two legs - had gone out the window by 1996. In its place was an unstable two-legged stool, and workers were reduced to a trash heap called "downsizing" or "right-sizing."

What a difference a couple of years have made! Today, there are worker shortages. Companies are being advised to treat research and scientific workers better.

Companies are being driven to improve their employee communications and training efforts, according to R&D Magazine's annual career satisfaction survey, sponsored by Kelly Scientific Resources.

Kelly Scientific Resources is the scientific business unit division of the area company we know as Kelly Services. Kelly Services provides more than 800,000 employees annually in office services, accounting, engineering, information technology, legal, scientific, marketing, light industrial and home care.

The majority of research workers were satisfied in their positions and praised their employers for being more open to new ideas, providing better job performance feedback and providing more opportunities for training and development.

Numerous R&D survey results support these findings. For example:

■ Nearly 58 percent of respondents said their employers are open to new ideas, versus only 34 percent in 1997.

■ More than 67 percent said employers are providing feedback about job performance, versus only 49 percent last year.

■ Nearly 60 percent said their employer offers them training and professional development opportunities.

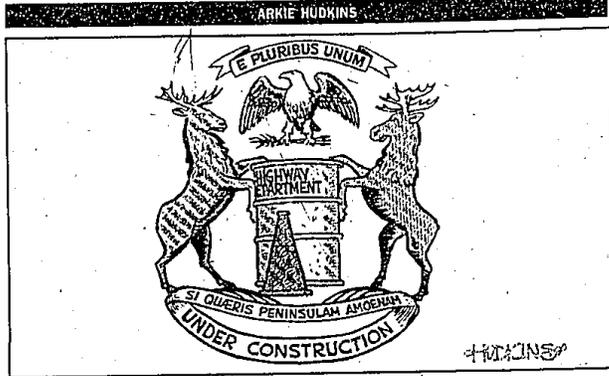
Rolf Kleiner, senior vice president and general manager of Kelly Scientific Resources, said, "In today's labor market, retaining employees is especially critical, and employers are getting that message from their employees. When you find good people, you need to work extra hard at keeping them challenged and growing."

The survey results show that company efforts are paying off. More than 36 percent of respondents say that in five years they plan to be in a better job with their current company.

Tim Studt, editor in chief of R&D Magazine, said, "Our research has consistently shown that scientists like what they do and intend to stay with their current companies. However, this year's results point out that today's employers understand that maintaining employee loyalty requires action on their part."

The R&D survey was sent to 5,000 research and development professionals in the U.S. and Canada. More than 33 percent responded.

Now it's time for all companies to recognize that all workers at all levels deserve recognition for new ideas, feedback and training. And while they're at it, corporate annual reports should recognize growth in employment, not just earnings per share, as a benchmark of corporate success.



LETTERS

That's wrong

Phillip Power in his recent editorial on entrepreneurial government repeats the oft-told but, unfortunately, incorrect version of the naming of the township of Novi.

According to the 1877 history of Oakland County, at an 1830 meeting of settlers in what was then the western portion of Farmington Township there was expressed a desire to form a separate township.

In discussing a name for the township residents expressed disdain for "long" names like Farmington, which were bothersome and difficult to write and wanted a name of no more than three or four letters. So J.C. Emery, at his wife's urging, for whatever unknown reason, proposed Novi which met this criteria. There was some opposition since the Latin experts in the community said Novi meant unknown or forgotten. But it was officially adopted in 1832 when the new township was formed, certainly before the coming of the stage coach stop and long before the interurban railway station. Like the famous "Constantine and the Constitution" story the Novi story is appealing, but not true.

James Dermody
Northville

Bumping into walls

It is obvious that nothing has changed from two years ago. Mr. Dibert is still bumping into walls.

He soundly criticizes his party's candidate for governor and then turns around and steps to misrepresenting the truth about the work done by our state Rep. Andrew Raczowski through Mr. Dibert's use of Feigerisms.

If Mr. Dibert is so incensed at the prospect of having Mr. Feiger as our governor, why does he copy him with the name calling and twisting of the facts? Don't say one thing, then soundly criticize. Is this what you offer the voters of the 37th House District?

Stick to the facts and leave the name calling and divisiveness to the top of your party's ticket. We already have a state representative, Andrew Raczowski, who is working hard for all the people in the Farmington area and we want to return him to Lansing this November.

Bill Smith
Farmington Hills

Where's the plan?

Neither the Road Commission for Oakland County or the Oakland County Board of Commissioners has a transportation policy to guide the planning, development and maintenance of our street, highway and road system. The new federal transportation bill, TEA-

21, just signed into law by President Clinton, and its predecessor, ISTEA, has significant planning provisions to ensure local residents have the opportunity for input and review of the transportation system plans in their local communities which affects their daily lives.

The USDOT, Michigan DOT and SEMCOG have policies supporting the inclusion of non-motorized (pedestrian and bicycling) modes in our transportation system plans.

Walking and bicycling offers an alternative mode of transportation which reduces air pollution, saves fuel, relieves traffic congestion and reduces wear/tear on the road, contributes to personal health and fitness, and improves our overall quality of life.

Non-motorized transportation facilities can be funded by the Transportation Enhancements Program of TEA-21, as administered by Michigan DOT. The singular most important element of obtaining funding is comprehensive local planning and support.

That local planning and support can best be accomplished if the locally elected Oakland County Board of Commissioners, and appointed road commissioners have a definitive publicly debated transportation policy to guide their fine professional staff of highway engineers and managers. The residents of Oakland County should accept nothing less from their elected representatives.

Fred Dore
Farmington Hills

Analogy falls short

I just didn't get the analogy between choosing your child's school and choosing judges and police officers in Tim Richard's article about "Engler campaign literature" in last Thursday's paper. And labeling School Choice Yes as a "sinister" group is downright silly. The whole point is that the schools got into really bad shape as a monopoly. They've been providing a worse education at a higher price than many private and parochial schools. Competition is already making them more accountable and cost-effective. Tim's clearly biased and poorly thought out article is editorializing, not reporting.

Pamela Boyd
Clarkston

Opinions are to be shared: We welcome your ideas, as do your neighbors. That's why we offer this space on a weekly basis for opinions in your own words. We will help by editing for clarity. To assure authenticity, we ask that you sign your letter and provide a contact telephone number.

Letters should be mailed to: Editor, The Farmington Observer, 33411 Grand River, Farmington Michigan 48335. Or they can be faxed to 248-477-9722.

COMMUNITY VOICE

QUESTION:
What's your favorite thing about fall?



"Change of leaf colors, the clear mill."
Kelly Deomellas
Farmington



"The colors. I go north hunting."
Barb Bowyer
Farmington



"We start making money again in the fall."
Robin Evans
Farmington



"The kids are off the streets and back in school."
Kathi Ashland
Farmington

We asked this question at the Farmington Public Schools' bus yard.

Farmington Observer

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— Philip Power