

Sprawl issues affect the details of our lives

My home is along the M-14 corridor that links the suburbs of western Wayne County with the relatively undeveloped areas of Livingston and Washtenaw counties. Once placidly rural, signs of development are cropping up all over.

The rich guy from Oakland County has just moved into his 14,000-square-foot starter home at the end of the road, complete with a gatehouse and a jet d'eau and a pair of mute swans in his pond. A new subdivision — complete with an inviting picture of a country landscape at the entrance — is going in just north of two new and truly hideous big houses, complete with gingerbread on every available surface. And a local family proposes to rezone their 360-acre farm to develop it as a trailer park.



Phil Power

None of this is big news to anybody who has looked around recently. Dirt is being scraped everywhere you look, whether it's for a new subdivision or mall or merely a trophy mansion.

The pressure of development has led to much hand-wringing about "sprawl" and numerous mind-numbing discussions about how to combat it. On the one hand are the pro-development folks, who never saw a development proposal they didn't like. Trumpeting slogans about private property rights and sneering at tree-huggers, they reflexively support any proposed development, preferably with a rationalized "subsidy" to gain revenue for the local tax base.

On the other side are anti-development folks who never saw a development they didn't hate. Chanting slogans about preserving farmland and green space, they fight losing battle after losing battle as sprawl encroaches daily on diminishing rural areas.

Caught in the middle are local governments, especially zoning authorities, who have master plans and an obligation to follow them but who are terrified of being sued to the breaking point should they deny developers the rezoning or use permits they seek.

Here are three starting points for a commonsense approach to this tangled subject.

Plainly, neither the automatic pro-development nor the reflexive anti-development posi-

tion can contribute much to useful discussion of this issue. A constructive re-framing might be for everybody to recognize that in many areas growth is inevitable, so the discussion really ought to revolve around how best to manage the growth that is certain to come. For example, my friend, former state Senator Lana Pollock, who runs the Michigan Environmental Council, talks sensibly about "smart growth" — meaning managed growth.

Michigan's Constitution puts a big barrier in the way. We are a "home rule" state, which means in practice that municipalities and, especially, townships, are free to adopt whatever zoning ordinances they wish, regardless of what their immediate neighbors happen to do. That means that a 200-acre shopping mall can be plunked down next to a determinedly rural township, and there's nothing anybody can do about it.

House Speaker Rick Johnson, by background a farmer from northern Michigan, has proposed a series of measures that would coordinate planning among neighboring government units. He deserves a lot of credit for willingness to break loose from a mind-set that places private self-interest over community values. While the Legislature is looking at that suggestion, some attention should also be given to immunizing zoning boards against frivolous lawsuits brought by deep-pocketed developers when things don't go their way.

Lastly, there are certain areas of the state that simply should be preserved from development. The Michigan Nature Conservancy, at 31,000 members one of the largest conservation organizations in the state, is in the process of unveiling a program that prioritizes threatened ecosystems according to hard scientific analysis. The Conservancy works with landowners who wish to place a "conservation easement" on their property, thereby preventing development for all time. It also helps fund outright land purchases and find conservation buyers who are prepared to buy and protect threatened areas.

Obviously, issues of sprawl are complicated, intensely local and often very difficult to resolve. They deserve higher priority in Michigan's public policy and political circles, if only because they affect so profoundly the intimate details of how we all live our lives.

Phil Power is a member of the board of the Michigan Nature Conservancy and chairman of HomeTown Communications Network Inc., the company that owns this newspaper. He welcomes your comments, either by voice mail at (734) 953-2047, Ext. 1880, or by e-mail at ppower@hometowncomm.net

LETTERS

Accessible

Congratulations to all the candidates who are running for the Board of Education.

I am sure a campaign takes a lot of time and energy. Several candidates have declared that their professional expertise in fields such as curriculum and guidance, negotiations and law, and distance learning will assist them in their board role.

It is not the duty of a school board member to advise, or micromanage in the day-to-day operations of a district.

Yes, we need our board members to be accessible. Pam Christian, a retired registered nurse, is the only candidate who can, and will, give her complete attention to the education of our community's children.

**Alicia Anderson
Farmington Hills**

Backs Christian

I am writing to express my support for Pam Christian in her campaign for election to the Farmington Board of Education. I have known the Christians since they moved to Farmington Hills, and have seen the many ways Pam has supported our district at both individual school and community levels.

Her background, drive, energy, and intense desire to do the right things to improve our children's education make her an outstanding addition to the school board. Please join me in voting for Pam Christian next month.

**Joey Lebovic
Farmington Hills**

Walks the walk

I had the pleasure of meeting Pam Christian, a candidate for school board several years ago at a Multi-Cultural Multi-Racial forum.

Her warm-hearted honesty and willingness to listen to views, that may not necessarily have been her own, with respect was remarkable. Upon leaving, she gave me her address and told me to visit one day. A year later, I visited her during the

death of her father.

As she and her family welcomed people from all "walks of life" into their home during what was a very personal time, we all felt like part of her family. The one thought that I had was...this lady not only talks the talk, she walks the walk. I commend her decision to run for the Board of Education...she will be great for the district and the community...I am certainly voting on Monday, June 11.

**Karen Moody
Farmington Hills**

Action oriented

Pam Charleston-Lyons is an action-oriented individual, currently working in public education. Since we have come to know Pam, I have been able to discuss many issues surrounding my children's educational welfare in the Farmington Hills Schools and she has been a great consultant to me.

She is not afraid to take issue with things outside the norm in the educational arena and to give good sound advice. With her busy schedule, she still has time to be active in her children's schools. I commend her.

**Annette Crouse
Farmington Hills**

Dedicated

As the youngest of my four children graduated from North Farmington High School on June 3, I couldn't help but reflect on the teachers and administrators who have touched my children's lives over the past 11 years at North Farmington.

Over the years, I have met and worked with many parents in volunteer positions. None have demonstrated more dedication to the youth of our community than John Goshorn.

John has stepped up as a leader on numerous occasions; he tackled each job with enthusiasm and seemingly endless energy. His own family and our youth are always at the forefront. John has known and worked with the youth of our community for many years. He understands the issues facing

our educational system, and I am confident that he is interested in working for what is best for the students of our community.

I want to see people on the school board who will make caring, intelligent decisions regarding the future of our schools. John Goshorn is that kind of person, and I strongly urge your support in the election.

**CaroleAnn Wilder
Farmington Hills**

Support millages

One June 12, voters will be asked to go to the polls to vote on two millage renewals for public education in our community.

Currently, we are very fortunate to have an exceptional high quality education for children from preschool through community college. The millage for the Farmington District Schools is a renewal that constitutes the major portion of their entire funding.

The renewal for Oakland Community College is equivalent to one third of their annual operating and maintenance support. Keep the Farmington Area in the forefront education.

Lend your support and vote Yes on both renewals.

**Jan C. Dolan
Farmington Hills**

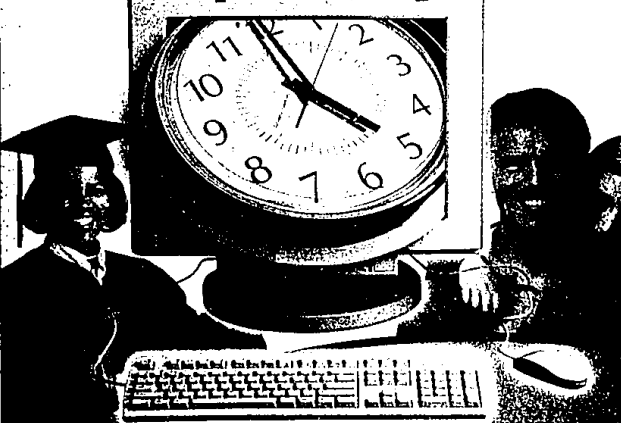
Family history

In the last part of June, the family and the city of Lehi, Utah, are honoring its founder, David Evans. His parents, Israel Evans (born 1770) and Abigail Alexander were some of the early settlers in Chatham and were buried in Farmington Hills.

Our family names are Israel Evans, Abigail Alexander, Mrs. Mulholland, Mrs. A.C. Mess, Mrs. J.T. Merritt, Mrs. S.E. Lockwood, Maude Evans, Harry Evans, Charley Evans, and Husted Evans, Nancy Dolan, Jessie Evans, John Trexler Merritt, the Sweet and Daniels family. We are making a great search for more history about this family. Please contact me as soon as possible.

**Mrs. Gordon Nebeker
Lander, Wyoming**

give your
grad or dad
the speed they need



Free Installation and
\$9.95 a Month for the 1st 2 Months!

2/\$28.50 U.S.
12 oz. (33.8 fl. oz.)

2/\$28.00 U.S.
12 oz. (33.8 fl. oz.)

WHAT BEER'S ALL ABOUT!

OTHER GREAT SAVINGS

3/\$28.00 U.S.
12 oz. (33.8 fl. oz.)

\$28.33 U.S.
12 oz. (33.8 fl. oz.)

Purchase 12 cans of Canada Beer (12 oz. each) and receive a FREE Gift of Super Beer Swirls! Message the Whole world to see it!

NEW CUSTOMS ALLOWANCES
Buy up to \$200 in foreign and U.S. duty-free products. Free and duty-free. Each time you visit Canada.

YOUR U.S. DOLLAR IS WORTH MORE IN CANADA! \$1.00 U.S. = \$1.50 Canadian

For information on purchase allowances call 1-800-668-7105. Offer available only at Windsor Tunnel Duty Free Shoppe. Prices subject to change without notice.

OPEN 24 HOURS A DAY. On the Canadian side of the Windsor Tunnel.

WINDSOR TUNNEL Duty Free Shoppe

www.dutyfree.com