

Hills officials dedicate Memorial Park at 11 Mile and Middlebelt

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The dedication Monday of Farmington Hills' Memorial Park represented a triumph of nature over development, at a busy intersection.

It also marked a crucial step in the establishment of a place where the city's honored dead

can be remembered in a setting of natural beauty.

"We don't have anything like that in the community," said Mayor Nancy Bates, adding that the city of Farmington is among several communities that have memorial parks.

"We certainly didn't want to do anything on this corner that would increase traffic," the

Farmington Hills mayor added.

At 6:30 p.m., several elected city officials sought shelter from the sun under a peaked, yellow and gray-striped tent erected on the park grounds at the southwest corner of 11 Mile and Middlebelt. From a podium, the mayor addressed onlookers seated on white folding chairs.

"This dedication ceremony is the culmination of countless hours of hard work, community cooperation and best of all, the desire to follow a dream from concept to reality," Bates said. The 3.2 acre parcel was donated to the city by Hospice of Michigan.

Backers say an added benefit of having a park on the corner is that it rules out business or commercial development at an intersection, which already includes a

shopping center, bank and Mercy High School.

Willows and other trees grow along a creek at the park's southern edge. Several elm trees have been planted, along with evergreen shrubs. Contrasting with grassy traditional park land are cutout areas mulched with wood chips, where more evergreen shrubs are to be planted. A row of white begonias flanks the front of the park's centerpiece — a stone marker engraved with "Memorial Park Farmington Hills."

The dedication ceremony opened with Eagle Scouts from Boy Scout Troop 110 presenting the green city flag with yellow fringe and black and white city seal, and the stars and stripes.

"On this day and in the days to come, we honor all those who

have gone before us," said the Rev. Mark Jensen of North Congregational Church in a dedication prayer. "Help us to remember their offerings of life, of civilization, and of love."

"Amidst the trees that bring forth buds in the spring, leaves of summer, colors during fall and nakedness in the winter, we find lessons of the high value of our days on earth, and the cycles of life and rebirth."

Plans to complete the park include brick pathways, benches and bird feeders. Residents can memorialize loved ones with engraved brick pavers or by donating money toward the purchase of benches, birdhouses or trees. The names of those being honored will be engraved on the memorial. Residents interested in making memorial donations

can call the city's public services department, 473-9521, or see information posted in the park.

Bates thanked the Hospice of Michigan for donating the land and members of the Memorial Park Ad Hoc Committee (Nancy Cosmoundouros, Norma Henderson, Jan Hunt, Carol Kasprzewicz and Shannon O'Neill) for project ideas, and Tom Biaselli, Jill Pines and Dan Rooney for detail work.

A donated brick costs \$100. Cost to donate landscaping materials will range from \$100 to \$1,000. Trees are \$1,000 and park benches \$5,000.

Officials approved the park concept in 1998. They earlier scrapped an idea to have an eternal flame, at an estimated cost of \$250,000 with \$8,000 in annual maintenance.



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BRESLER

Standing proud: Billy Hinbern of Boy Scout Troop 110 holds the American flag as Mayor Nancy Bates dedicates Farmington Hills' Memorial Park.

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