

Ice Rinks Bustin' Out All Over!

An Observer Roundup Dealers in ice skates and hockey equipment should be rubbing their hands with glee. All Overlandland seems to be in the process of putting its citizens on ice.

Livonia started the trend. Southfield came second. Plymouth was third, when it opened its new rink last month.

And this month Garden City and Redford Township are getting into the act. Both have had outdoor rinks, but this month new covered rinks go into operation. There are indications that Westland and Farmington won't be far behind.

And "them as has" are making plans to build more arenas. Livonia wants another larger one on Seven Mile Road, but is having trouble getting the voters to approve the \$1.7 million needed. Southfield has the money and hopes to open another in 1973.

Livonia opened the first ice arena in Overlandland in September, 1968. The Ford Field ice rink on Lyndon cost the city \$585,000. Its second rink, Devon-Aire, was opened in February 1969, at a cost of \$503,000 (it has no bleachers or dressing rooms). Funds for these came from a bond issue passed in 1966, when \$4.4 million was voted to purchase land and build the rinks and two pools.

In 1968, Livonia had 650 persons, mostly girls and women, taking figure skating lessons from three instructors. Today the program is still growing. This year, there are 1,350 taking lessons. They have seven instructors

and an eighth may be hired soon. Kids line up overnight to register for the hockey program, and there is a waiting list. Livonia boys have to wait until they are seven to join the Mites. The normal starting age is five.

FIGURE SKATING instructors, who expected that the girls would lose interest as they began to notice the opposite sex, found things didn't work out this way. And the bigger the girl the more room is needed to practice.

"This is one way in which we can do more for girls," said a parks and recreation department employee.

Thus they feel a third rink is needed, and would like to have one which would accommodate more spectators for ice shows and hockey games.

Though the voters didn't approve a recent proposal for raising the money, the possibility of using Livonia's federal revenue sharing funds for this project is now being discussed.

SOUTHFIELD'S rink was opened officially in May, 1971, on its 179-acre Civic Center site. The facility, which includes the ice arena and a pool, came about as a result of the revenue bond issue. The revenue bond is to be repaid by the building authority by revenue from operations of the pool, rink and golf course. Two additional pool-rink complexes will be funded by \$6 million general obligation bond, which was approved by

the voters. It will be repaid by a tax levy in addition to the present tax structure, meaning an average \$7.50 per year per average home over a 20-year period. Work has already begun on a second complex.

Since Southfield and Livonia's rinks are tied up in a recreation package which includes the pools, it's difficult to say whether or not they can or will be self-supporting.

But according to Southfield sports arena manager, Rejean Tremblay, "The operation is successful. I don't think we lose money, but recreation is not to make money."

PLYMOUTH'S NEW rink opened two weeks ago and signed up its 650 figure skaters in the first few days. There is still room for a few more in daytime classes Wednesday, Thursday and Friday.

The first \$70,000 for Plymouth's \$1.5 million rink and cultural center came from the state of Michigan under the \$100 million recreation bonding program approved in 1968. The city commission and municipal housing authority issued bonds for the balance of money, and the rink is built on land leased to the city by the Plymouth school board for \$1 a year for 99 years.

According to Mayor Eugene McKinney, plans are being made for a facility that will serve as more than an ice rink, something that could be used to provide room for concerts and large group meetings as well as tennis courts.

Then came the news of the federal revenue sharing program and great jubilation. According to Mayor James W. Lowe, the city will receive \$383,000 from the fund.

The new arena is located at the site of the old outdoor one, in the Garden City park on Merriman and Cherry Hill. REDFORD TOWNSHIP will officially open its new rink at 9:30 a.m. Saturday, Oct. 21.

Site of the rink is 12400 Beech Daly (behind the Township Water Board Building) and its total cost is around \$675,000.

The facility is being financed through bonds, and is expected to pay for itself and retire the bonds over 29 years.

The parks and recreation department will continue to maintain its outdoor rink on Beech Daly between Six and Seven Mile.

Farmington, like Plymouth, has spent many years in debating about building a rink. It will be voted on again in November.

The latest proposal is to build a \$1.2 million ice arena-sports complex on four acres on the Farmington High School property.

Revenue would pay approximately half the cost of the bonds.

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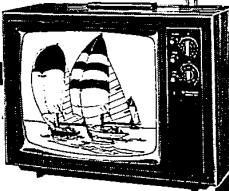
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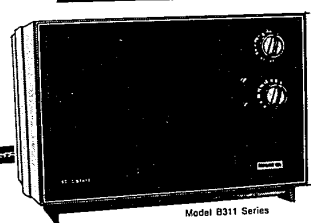
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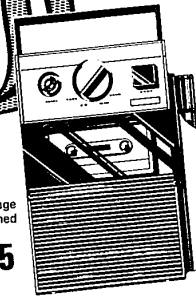


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