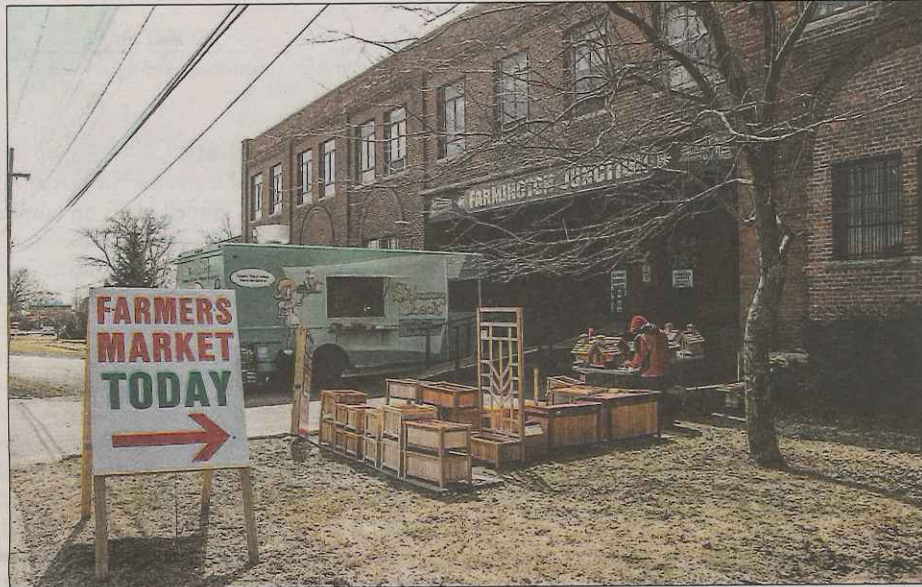


# Indulge the taste buds, senses at Old Winery Farmers Market

**RIGHT:** The Old Winery Farmers Market, an indoor winter market, has locally grown produce, artisanal items and more for the picking. **FAR RIGHT:** Shoppers peruse the items at the farmers market.

Photos by Patricia O'Brien



BY SHERRI KOLADE  
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FARMINGTON — When the lights flicker on, the Old Winery Farmers Market hums to life with the buzz of vendors display-

ing rows of food, crafts and knitted items at the winter market.

“We usually have some exciting things going on,” Jean Smith, owner and market manager said.

Old Winery Farmers Market, 31505 Grand River Ave., typically runs 10 a.m.-2

p.m. mid-November through April.

The market typically has more than 90 rotating vendors — with about 30 on any given Saturday — including vegan food truck Shimmy Shack, Uncle Calvin’s Sweet Potato Pies, fi-

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## Police search for church donation box theft suspect

BY SHERRI KOLADE  
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FARMINGTON HILLS — The Farmington Hills Police De-

partment is asking for the public to help identify a suspect in the larceny of a church donation box.

The crime occurred at about 11:55 a.m. March 31 at the Mon-

astery of the Blessed Sacrament, located on Middlebelt Road, north of 13 Mile Road. The suspect is described as a man in his 30s, of unknown race, with a me-

dium build, and a short, neatly trimmed beard. He was last seen wearing a short black jacket, blue jeans and a blue L.A. Dodgers

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## School board approves sale of Flanders

BY SHERRI KOLADE  
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FARMINGTON — The Flanders Elementary School site will be developed in the next few years into single-family homes after Farmington Public Schools Board of Education trustees unanimously approved the development plans during an April 1 board meeting.

Trustees Sheilah Clay and Murray Kahn were absent.

The district received request for proposals for the FPS-owned Flanders site, 32600 Flanders St., from interested parties, and during a March 18 Board of Education meeting, top bidder Windmill Homes, LLC, discussed its plans for the 10-acre site.

After the Board of Education vote on the property, Jon Riebe, the district’s facilities operations and transportation director, said Windmill Homes was the best company to choose.

“After consulting with our property consultant, Great Northern Consulting Group, it is felt that Windmill Homes submitted a solid offer to the district,” he said. “I think it is a win-win for everybody. I think we got the best value and the best use.”

Windmill Homes, which developed the Riverwalk Development,

See SALE on page 15A

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# Sale

from page 3A

near the Flanders site, proposed 34 homes, each between 2,000 and 2,500 square feet, priced between \$200,000 and \$275,000. The company is also offering about 1.6 acres within the development for a neighborhood park.

Riebe informed the board in March that approximately 20 developers had shown some interest in the property, but three developers, including Windmill Homes, formally responded to the RFP Jan. 28.

Flanders was one of the four district elementary schools to close recently, and was demolished in the summer of 2011.

In addition to Windmill Homes, the district received offers back from Generation Development, \$500,000, for 30 home sites and no green space; and Yeldo Construction, with an offer of \$375,000, an approximately two-acre parcel of green space and 30 home sites.

"Each of the developers proposed different development options with varying lot sizes and street configurations," Riebe said during the March meeting.

He said a district interview team was established, and interviews were held with Windmill Homes and Yeldo Construction to understand the development plans they may be willing to offer in order to have a green area as part of the overall development.

"With the knowledge of the potential incentives in hand, the developers were asked to give their last and best offer in late February or early March," Riebe said.

He added that the best and last offer was from Windmill Homes, which provided an original offer for \$501,600, with an approximately 1-acre parcel of green space and 38 home sites; they upped their offer by \$48,400 to the current \$550,000 with an approximately 1.6-acres of green space and four fewer lots in the development plan.

George Major, one of the owners of Windmill Homes, presented a preliminary development layout submitted for approval.

Major said his company is "very excited" to pursue the opportunity to develop a community

in the city of Farmington and the FPS area.

"We have worked with the city of Farmington and trying to meet some of the objectives of FPS to design a community that would fit as well as possible into the neighborhood where the Flanders Elementary School is located," Major said. "We ... are trying to continue some of the park or playground area that had existed for the neighborhood."

During the March meeting, Trustee Karen Bolson inquired about a walking path between the original Riverwalk and the new developments, and whether that would still happen.

Major said there would be an easement preserved in the plan for the north area of the property that would connect to the public right of way, which then connects to a path built in the Riverwalk community.

"We're going to put in a sidewalk so the two communities will continue to link up, and hopefully they will be able to use that park," he said.

Riebe said the school district is selling the property with the green area because the district doesn't intend to build that as a formal park.

"That would be between the city and the developer during their planning and developing negotiations," he said.

City Manager Vincent Pastue said in March that he anticipates that there could be an active use on the front part, toward Flanders Street.

During a March 26 community meeting in City Hall, Kevin Christiansen, economic and community development director, told a handful of attendees that putting the Flanders property back on the tax roll would be "complementary to the neighborhood."

Farmington resident Patricia Mahanti, who lives a few blocks away from Flanders on Birchwood Street, said that she moved into the neighborhood so her two children could attend the school within walking distance from their home. Her youngest child was unable to finish schooling at Flanders when it closed.

She said the neighborhood doesn't need more housing.

"I would like to see it remain an open space just as it is, but I

know that it is not going to happen," she said.

She said that with a neighborhood of "old, colonial ranches," a development of single-family homes that could have five bedrooms would stick out like a sore thumb.

"To put these new houses in an established neighborhood of very modest homes, it is just so out of place," she said.

Christiansen said during a December community meeting that the goal is to get the "most efficient use of the land."

He added that further research has not been conducted because the proposals are in the very beginning stages, and any selected proposal would not diminish existing neighborhoods' characteristics or impact infrastructure.

Pastue said city officials are looking at how to grow the city's tax base.

"In the end, what we are hopeful for is to get the highest and best redevelopment for the Flanders School site possible," Christiansen said.

Board President Howard Wallach said that there will always be mixed feelings about selling FPS property.

"Obviously, Flanders School (was) very important to the district and area at large," Wallach said. "That area is a community school."

He said the surrounding neighborhood went through a period of "mourning" after the school was closed and demolished.

He said that having green space afterward was a nice change for families and children to play.

"Now, there is going to be another change, but it is important to us and important to the city of Farmington that we preserve as much green space as we could," Wallach said.

"In the long-term, the goal is that it would benefit the city of Farmington by having 30-some odd houses in their community," he said. "We hope that many of those homes have children who would attend our schools, so that it can be a positive experience for the city and school district."

To learn more, visit [www.farmington.k12.mi.us](http://www.farmington.k12.mi.us).

Call Staff Writer Sherri Kolade at (586) 498-1046.

## LETTERS EDIT

### To the Editor:

I am writing as a student activist in the Farmington Public School District.

Since the opening of the same-sex marriage ban, I have heard a lot of homophobic, gay, bisexual, and queer comments. I feel a relief that the fight is over. While the issue of equality is certain, and our goals will inevitably be achieved, there are more pressing issues.

Forty percent of children in the Farmington district are LGBTQ (the district), and generally diverse youth at twice the rate of their peers. Eighty percent of gender adults reporting bullying in the focus on national LG organizations have a future of their c



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