

BUSINESS

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NANCY CRAWLEY
PRESS BUSINESS EDITOR

Job success often hinges on mentors

► *And they, too, share the luster when careers are lifted.*

Consider these three events that came within a week of each other:

- Grand Rapids' largest bank named its first woman president ever;
- Michigan's largest university named its first woman president ever;
- And a federal judge let 1.6 million women in on a sex-discrimination lawsuit against the country's largest employer, making it the largest civil rights lawsuit ever.

All three happened within six days. But the thread running through them was not obvious to me right away.

Public acclaim was enthusiastic for Fifth Third West Michigan's new president, Michelle Van Dyke, and Michigan State University's new president, Lou Anna Simon.

The wonder, of course, is why it took so long for women to crack those glass ceilings. The relief was that it had finally happened.

Only a few days later, a federal judge in San Francisco agreed to expand a lawsuit against Wal-Mart, the world's largest retailer, into a class-action suit representing 1.6 million current and former employees.

The plaintiff's attorney called it a victory on behalf of the "women who have been told repeatedly they have been unsuitable for management and not suitable to make as much as men."

U.S. District Judge Martin Jenkins explained his decision, saying: "The plaintiff's present largely uncontested descriptive statistics which show that women working at Wal-Mart stores are paid less than men in every region."

He went to say the same statistics show "pay disparities exist in most job categories, that the salary gap widens over time, that women take longer to enter management positions, and that the higher one looks in the organization the lower the percentage of women."

Help from above

So, in summer 2004, what can we conclude about women in the U.S. workplace from these stories? It's not about the glass ceiling and wage gaps between men and women — they are hardly news.

But at least one important lesson is gleaned in comparing these events, one I found after talking to Sharon Newton Caldwell, executive director of the Women's Resource Center, and Lori Gibson, a Warner Norcross & Judd attorney who advises corporations on avoiding cases such as Wal-Marts.

Mentors make a huge difference. Van Dyke and Simon both had them. The Wal-Mart women not only believe they never did, but that they had the polar opposite of mentoring.

The 40-year-old Van Dyke did not suddenly emerge as a candidate for the president's job at the bank that controls a third of the West Michigan market.

She gained experience over 19 years working in almost every division of the bank, guided and advised along the way by President Kevin Kabat, who then handpicked her as his successor.

Likewise, Lou Anna Simon, 57, labored all of her professional life at MSU. As provost, she was President Peter McPherson's right-hand executive.

And it was McPherson who recommended her to the MSU Board of Trustees — the same board that had declined to select her the last time. This time, it shunned a national search to unanimously choose her.

It is this all-important champion that can help a woman's career take off.

No help at all

In contrast, the women in the Wal-Mart suit describe the dismal exercise of training men and then watching them get promoted by other men, ahead of their female trainers.

There "tends to be not blatant, but unwritten rules (on how men and women are treated), and I think that may be the Wal-Mart case," Gibson said. "People just tend to associate with the people they like, and the people they golf and hunt with become people they bring along and mentor."

The merits of their argument will have to be sorted out as the suit unfolds.

But, when you think about it, there is another lesson here: It's not just women's careers that are lifted in the mentoring process.

Van Dyke's mentor, Kabat also was promoted. He moves up to supervise all 17 affiliate banks in Fifth Third's universe, knowing he left the Grand Rapids bank in capable hands.

And McPherson will leave as one of MSU's most respected and accomplished presidents. That he ushered in the school's first woman president only adds to his luster.

Business Editor Nancy Crawley may be reached at ncrawley@gr-press.com.

"It will be the kind of site that some day people will say, 'Boy, I wish I put my store there.'"

— BILL BUSSEY, real estate agent



Look into the future: Granger Group President Gary Granger, right, and Greg Markvluer, vice president of development and financial services, are among those planning the undeveloped retail village next to the new Metropolitan Hospital in Wyoming. Their vision for the site is superimposed over today's landscape.

Birth of a village

Developers envision 'downtown' around new hospital

W Y O M I N G

By Chris Knappe
The Grand Rapids Press

Hip stores, hip restaurants and hip replacements. Welcome to 21st-century retailing the Metro Health Village way. When Metropolitan Hospital opens its new 208-room hospital in Wyoming, it is widely expected to change the landscape of the area's booming health-care industry.

But developers also are banking on the "village" being planned along side the hospital to change the way this region shops.

"You won't see something like this in a

textbook, but it fits," said Fred Marx, a retailing consultant and former Hudson's executive.

A built-in base of health-care employees with recession-resistant jobs, plus the captive audience of hospital visitors, makes retailing a logical combination, Marx said.

What remains to be seen is whether a "lifestyle center" development that mimics a small downtown can meld with a hospital to create a new retail market in West Michigan.

Skeleton on the skyline

Today, only a skeletal steel frame of the 460,000-square-foot hospital is in place, surrounded by fields where deer still roam, an old red barn, a few houses and the unopened M-6 South Beltline freeway.

Once completed, Metro will move out of its hospital on Grand Rapids' Southeast Side. Construction on the hospital has stopped while Metro hospital executives weigh a federally

backed financing plan versus selling traditional bonds. (See story below)

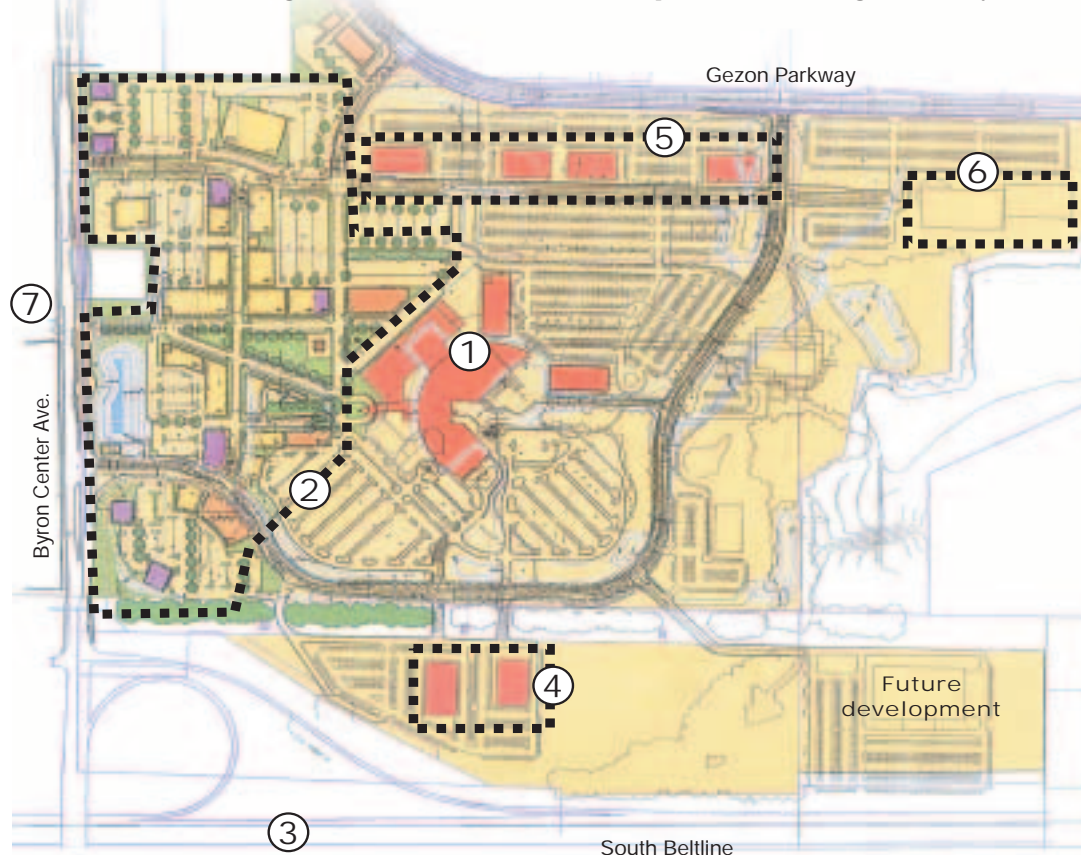
Despite the halt, hospital officials insist there is still no question the facility will be completed.

Developer Gary Granger's company has a 50-50 partnership with Metro, which owns about one-third of the village property. He said he and Metro will forge ahead with plans for the separately financed retail side of the development regardless of the hospital's construction status.

By the end of 2006, developers envision tree-lined streets, parks and buildings abutting sidewalks, creating a neo-downtown on the site's western end.

Coffee shops, banks, drug stores, national retailers, boutiques and restaurants are expected to blend with the hospital, offices, and laboratories. There also could be apartments, a nursing home and a hotel to create a bustling self-

see METRO, C9



The Plan

Here's what's happening around the Metro Health Village site:

- 1 Metropolitan Hospital \$150 million, 208 beds, opening December 2006. Construction halted while financing sorted out.
- 2 Village lifestyle center More than 200,000 square feet of retail, restaurant, office and living space. First opening in fall 2005.
- 3 M-6 South Beltline \$650 million, 20-mile freeway connecting to Int. 196, and U.S. 131, may open late 2005.
- 4 Hotel, restaurant site
- 5 Medical office buildings
- 6 Medical fitness center \$20 million.
- 7 Future development



Bayberry Galleria Retail center on 9 acres targeting upscale regional and national stores. May open in 2005.

PRESS GRAPHIC

Metro financing limbo brings construction to a standstill

W Y O M I N G

By Kathleen Longcore
The Grand Rapids Press

The steel skeleton of Metropolitan's new hospital sits silent in the summer sun.

Hospital officials put work on ice last month while they pursued two financing options for the eight-story facility in Wyoming.

Metro, now housed in an aging facility on Grand Rapids' Southeast Side, broke ground in August. By Christmas, it had site work done, footings poured and steel work started at the 165-acre site off

Gezon Parkway SW, near the new M-6 freeway.

But plans to sell bonds to finance the \$150 million project hit a snag, and the hospital halted the sale in the preliminary stages.

A hospital official blamed the dimly low rates of return on bonds last winter. But a \$10 million wrongful discharge lawsuit filed by former employee Mary T. Scott also may have had a chilling effect on efforts to sell bonds.

The hospital's chief financial officer Robert Smedes said news of the lawsuit broke just as Metro was doing its preliminary pitch to bond investors.

And when hospital officials saw

the lukewarm reception, they postponed the sale.

And now, a decision to pursue Federal Housing Administration financing does not look as rosy as it did a month ago.

Last month, Metro officials said they could save \$15 million by financing through FHA instead of selling bonds. The downside is that they were required to stop construction during the application process.

Smedes thought they could get the FHA deal sealed in three months, a delay that wouldn't affect their construction timeline.

see SNAG, C9

THE STORY SO FAR

Metropolitan Hospital still seeks financing for its new hospital.

December 2002 The state certificate-of-need commission gives Metro the go-ahead to build a new hospital.

August 2003 Metro breaks ground at its new site in Wyoming.

October 2003 Metro asks Standard & Poors for a new bond rating and prepares for a bond sale.

December 2003 Federal officials unseat a whistleblower lawsuit and fine the hospital \$6.3 million.

January 2004 Metro halts its bond sale.

June 2004 Hospital officials pursue FHA financing, which requires them to stop construction.

June 2004 Metro finds time and money constraints with FHA.

July 2004 Metro pursues both FHA and a possible bond sale.

PRESS GRAPHIC