

that east/west
d, it would bene-
area," Sprouse
eds to happen
ater."
way acquisition
or the U.S. 412
id they'd like to
jects the region
before they're
board with a
lf-cent sales tax
y for state high-
tion.
ere's any support
ple are gonna
here they bene-

to ask voters to pass a tax for
local street projects in the
future.

Lowell Mayor Eldon Long
said better roads can offset
the impact of a tax by reduc-
ing congestion and allowing
motorists to save time, fuel
and money.

"Infrastructure can reduce
our costs in some instances,"
Long said.

With gasoline approach-
ing \$4 per gallon, the region
needs to develop alternative
transportation systems, rang-
ing from trails to public trans-
it, to move people around

Regional Transit stands to
lose about \$1 million in federal
money annually and is now
seeking a quarter-cent sales
tax, which would raise about
\$15 million a year.

Phil Pumphrey, executive
director of Ozark Regional
Transit, said without sales tax
money public transit could
disappear.

Regional Transit funding
drew a mixed reaction from
the mayors. It's not as popular
in Benton County as Washing-
ton County.

Rogers Mayor Greg Hines
said the Benton County

either don't have access to a
car or don't have a driver's
license.

Students use the transit
system to attend classes at
NorthWest Arkansas Commu-
nity College, the elderly use
it to get to medical appoint-
ments and stores and low-
income people use it to get to
work, Pumphrey said. Para-
transit routes provided 25,000
rides to people with physical
handicaps last year.

Transit also reduces the
number of cars on the road,
easing congestion and saving
gasoline, he said.

SUIT: Helder Says Focus On Future

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1A

Helder, Hoyt, Osburn and
the Sheriff's Office were all
named as defendants.

Guenther later amended
the lawsuit, claiming she
was fired in retaliation for
the case and Helder retali-
ated against employees who
refused to treat the women
as an enemy. Schmidt was
also fired from the depart-
ment after the lawsuit was
filed, but did not file a simi-
lar claim.

Kester said he is unsure
where Schmidt and Guenther
are employed or if they still
work in law enforcement.

"I think it's settled to both
parties' satisfaction," Helder
said. "It's good to have it
behind us and we can focus
on the future now."

The lawsuit did not result
in any changes to policies
within the department, the
sheriff said.

George Butler, county
attorney, said Schmidt and
Guenther were originally
seeking \$1.2 million from
the county. The women will
be paid from Association of
Arkansas County's risk
management fund, a county
government insurance pool
of which Washington County
is a member.

One reason for the settle-
ment was the concern if the
case were to go to trial, the
women could have been
awarded a smaller sum, but
the final figure could have
exceeded \$395,000 because of
attorneys' fees, Butler said.

"It was possible that it
could have been a paltry
amount, but it also could
have been substantial," he
said.

CORRECTIONS

As a matter of policy,
the Northwest Arkansas Times
will publish corrections of
errors in fact that have been
printed in the newspaper.
The corrections will be

Lack Of Ethnic Diversity May Hamper Growth In Area

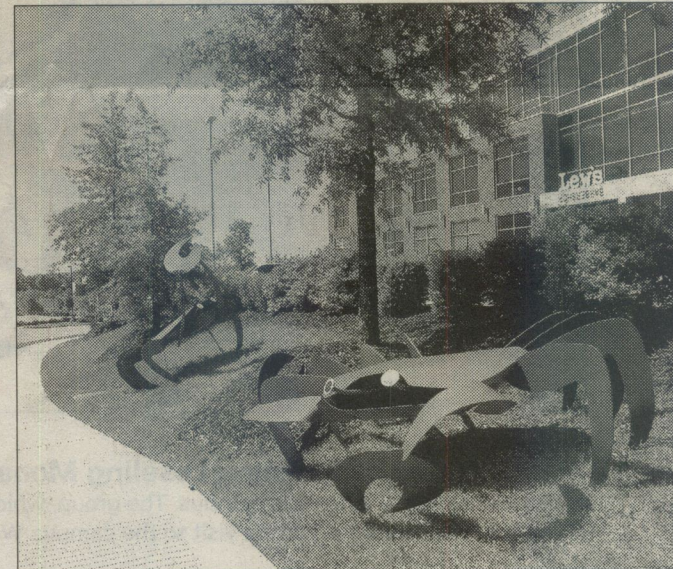
ities.
Mayor Doug
he wants more
t along Inter-
exits such as
ling to Arvest
ne of the Texas
rthwest Arkan-
eglected our
ver the years,"

the Environmental Protec-
tion Agency on wastewa-
ter issues he said limit
construction.

In an afternoon session,
a three-person panel of real
estate and banking profes-
sionals said they expect a
gradual rebound in resi-
dential and commercial
construction and sales.

However, housing subdivi-
sions in Benton and Wash-
ington counties have up
to 17,000 vacant lots, said
real estate appraiser Tom
Reed of Reed and Associ-
ates in Fayetteville.

He said 20 percent of
those lots are in subdivi-
sions where construction
has stopped. Vacant lots in
those places may have to
revert to pastures, he said.



STAFF PHOTO FLIP PUTTHOFF

Metal crab sculptures advertise a seafood
restaurant in part of new development in the upscale Pinnacle
area north of the original Pinnacle development in Rogers.

Left With Undisclosed Amount Of Money, Headed West

AT A GLANCE

THE LAST ROBBERY

robbery at the Bank of Fayetteville branch also happened
morning.

Robert Cossimini, 29, walked into the bank Jan. 14 and
e to a bank employee, demanding money. He was
hours later at the Comfort Inn & Suites on Steamboat
st Wedington Drive.

es a felony charge of aggravated robbery. He was in
ton County Detention Center on \$10,000 bond Friday.
t for May 16.

SOURCE: STAFF REPORT

Residents Jennifer Wewers
and Eileen Thoma said
they were the last custom-
ers before the bank closed
Friday morning.

Thoma said nothing
seemed out of the ordinary
when she arrived at the bank,
but by the time she left and
drove back by the entrance,
it was blocked off by police.

"It must have been an in-
and-out type of thing," she
said.

Thoma said she thought
robbers might target the
train bank because of its
proximity to the trail, which
could make for an easy
escape route.

Stout said he didn't know

traffic around there, it's easy
for someone to disappear
into the crowd. Some people
may not want to use (the
trail) because they might
stand out more."

Moore said Friday's
robbery doesn't make her
feel any less safe.

"It was probably just some
broke college student," she
joked. "I'm not afraid. I know
the police will catch him."

The Bank of Fayetteville
issued a statement less
than an hour after Friday's
robbery saying the business
would be closed until further
notice.

Lindsay Ramsey, the bank's
marketing director, said the

king down the
saw some cops
le questions,"
Joe Moore of

said she remembers the first
time the bank was robbed
four months ago, after she
moved to the area.

"I remember being