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Guide helps new home

By Shirlee Rose Iden
staff writer

CONSUMERS IN a medical clinic may know that the knee bone's connected to the thigh bone, or maybe not.

But for the new home purchaser who faces an unbelievable array of decisions as the home evolves from paper plans to brick and mortar and then home furnishings, more than a little bit of knowledge is required.

In the metropolitan area, the new-home boom has grown to epidemic proportions with subdivisions and custom homes springing up mile after square mile.

Barbi Krass, an interior designer whose studio, Colorworks, is on Northwestern Highway in Farmington Hills, where a lot of the building hubbub is taking place, has devised a practical guide for prospective home buyers.

HER "GUIDE FOR Building a New Home" contains information that begins with the initial purchase agreement and walks the buyer through confrontations with architects, electricians and plumbers, as well as decisions on fixtures, tile, flooring, carpeting and more.

Krass, who started her business in the lower level of her Southfield home back in 1977, began to put her guide together about six months ago. She contends her challenge is to know the market, be aware of what's available, and know how to use all the resources.

"It's near to impossible for a client building one home to do all that research and not go bananas in the process," she said.

Born in Poughkeepsie, N.Y., Krass has lived in Germany,

'It's near impossible for a client building one home to do all that research and not go bananas in the process.'

—Barbi Krass
guide book author

Scranton, Pa., and in Boston during college years, studying art and education.

With degrees in fine arts and English literature from Boston University, she went from school to teaching English literature to gifted students.

After marriage to a medical student and the birth of a son and daughter, she came to live here where she pursued dancing, design projects, sewing and other endeavors. By 1981, her marriage had broken up and she was on her own with two dependent children.

AFTER A THREE-year friendship with Ed Krass, a Southfield teacher who taught one of her children, Krass remarried, calling that decision "the best I ever made."

Clients at Colorworks, about 90 percent new-construction oriented, find building a new home exciting, rewarding or nerve-racking and frustrating, explains Krass.

"With so much to invest and so many decisions to make, it is often difficult to keep calm," she said. "It helps to remember that people involved in the business process are only human and can and do make mistakes."

"Architects, builders and designers are not infallible, but in choosing these people carefully,

a new home buyer can minimize error and ensure good will should an error need to be resolved."

Krass' guidebook lays out some of the many decisions and selections buyers have to face from site location to trees to marble.

Home buyers should make a point of knowing what the builder will expect of them during construction. They should also articulate their own expectations.

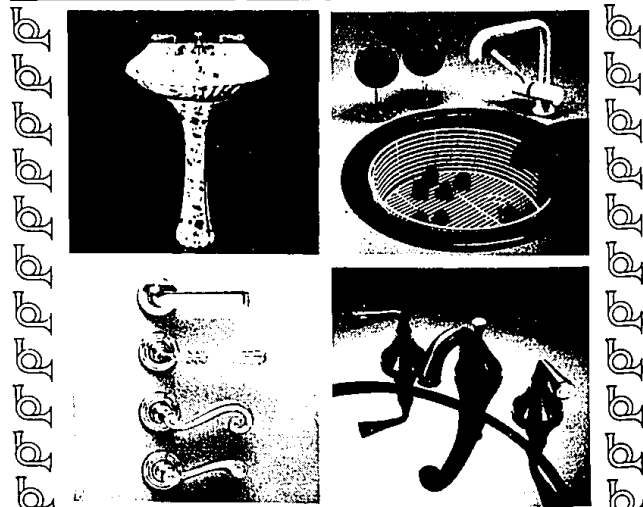
"CLIENTS OFTEN need help in understanding the initial purchase agreement and what it contains," she said. "I tell my clients there should be a guaranteed completion date binding on the contractor."

"If the house is not ready on time, the builder will pay your rent until it is. Builders will sign these agreements rather than lose a sale. But they won't sign if you don't ask."

New home buyers have to bear financial scrutiny to secure a mortgage. Krass contends the builder should be just as carefully scrutinized.

"You should check out the builder by talking both to his clients about how they like their home and to his creditors (sub-contractors). If he doesn't pay his bills, the people who do his cabinetry, electricity and plumbing aren't going to deliver their

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