

Residential from page 1G

"I think the attitude of the buyer is good," he said. "They probably realize that if they have a job now they will (continue to) have a job. I think the economy has bottomed out."

"The housing economy is strong because there's plenty of people out there still working who can afford to buy a house," Gieberman said.

Fred Capaldi Jr., a Rochester Hills builder and first vice president for BASM, also attributed the increase in residential permits to low interest rates.

"It means to me we always have a

big upsurge in spring," he said. "We have a home show, the weather breaks, people finally make up their minds. Then we go through a lull, then it picks up again in September."

Capaldi also offered an explanation as to why permits slipped a bit in May.

"When I talk to some competitors, they tell me they are some softening. One problem they see is they have presold some houses with the expectation that Mr. and Mrs. Purchaser could sell their homes."

They can't and this is dragging on."

Capaldi said his new housing starts so far this year are on par with last, while his remodeling business has increased.

Weather has little impact on building permits pulled, Capaldi and Gieberman agreed.

Rochester Hills was the only Observer & Eccentric growth community that experienced a decline during the five-month period. At that, it was slight, slipping to 142 units from 162.

They exactly matched its five-month 1991 total with 147 units.

Wayne communities showing gains included Canton, 229 units from 118; Livonia, 238 from 220; and Plymouth Township, 48 from 36.

Livonia and Canton placed one-two by a substantial margin in number of units permitted in the county.

Oakland communities showing gains included Farmington Hills, 178 units from 82; West Bloomfield, 120 from 77; and Bloomfield Township, 66 from 38.

Now, with 344 units permitted, led the way in Oakland.

While the year-to-date figures showed substantial gains, most communities issued permits for fewer residential units this May than last.

Canton, for instance slipped to 30 from 45, Rochester Hills to 37 from 53 and Farmington Hills to 18 from 28.

Neiman Marcus

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On the first level, in men's sportswear, antique maps of Michigan provide a historical reference.

Work studies and photo sketches of cars from the design staffs at Ford, Chrysler and General Motors are on view in the men's clothing fitting area. On the second level, there is work by local artists such as the Cranbrook 50th Anniversary Portfolio of 12 prints by Cranbrook students that are displayed along with two paintings by Michigan artist Valeria Parks.

Black-and-white photography by Michigan photographer Dirk Bakker line the walls of the 60-seat, third-floor restaurant.

Joe Fecko, vice president for visual planning for Neiman Marcus, said, "We want our customers to feel as though they are in a beautiful home filled with fine art. We believe the art collection adds warmth and sophistication to all areas of

the store and provides a global view as well as reflecting something of the community."

Neiman Marcus is an all-encompassing environment where the craft of fashion merchandising is enhanced by a rich interior harmonized with fine and decorative art that are neatly packaged in an identifiable exterior.

Someone once said let the buyer beware." But in the case of Neiman Marcus, it's let the buyer be "aware" of a total shopping experience. Herbert Marcus Sr., his sister Carrie Marcus Neiman and her husband A.L. Neiman sure knew what they were doing back in 1907. The new Neiman Marcus store is one more successful example of their efforts.

Dale Northup is a professor of architectural history.

Shape up kitchen space

AP — The biggest problem in kitchens often is not a lack of storage space, but the inefficient use of the space. The following tips will help make every inch of space in the kitchen count:

- Convert the area between studs into storage for canned and packaged goods. If left open, the area can provide storage for cookware.

- Set cutting boards and marble pastry slabs on a wooden track inside the top of cutlery drawers. Cut a marble slab to fit a refrigerator shelf so it can be stored, kept cool, and ready for pastry at the same time.

- Build an appliance garage with an electrical outlet in the back into the space between the counter and cabinet.

- Replace fixed shelves with pullout trays to make good use of the hard-to-reach corners of a cabinet. (The hardware needed to make these changes is readily available in hardware and home improvement stores.)

- U-shape shelves that hug the walls in a broom closet need be only 3 1/2 inches deep to provide storage for cans. The wall surface in a back entry could hold a series of narrow L-shape shelves.

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