

BUILDING SCENE

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BUILDING SCENE'S NAMES & PLACES

Opens architectural firm

Arthur F. Smith of Rochester Hills has left Kenneth Neumann/Joel Smith & Associates as director of design to form his own firm, Arthur F. Smith Architects in Southfield.

Services include programming, architectural design, interior design and master planning.

Smith was named 1985 Young Architect of the Year by the Detroit chapter of the American Institute of Architects.

Smith

Gamache promoted

Stephen Gamache of Birmingham was named vice president of the industrial division at Trivice Tosto, Birmingham. He shares responsibility for sales management, including recruiting, hiring and training sales personnel.

Novi Hilton facelift

Ford & Earl Associates of Troy will handle the 25,000-square-foot renovation project at the Novi Hilton. Lobbies, banquet rooms and meeting facilities will be given an country/Mediterranean look. The project is set for completion in August.

3 NTH associates

Three NTH Consultants employees have been named associates at the Farmington Hills firm. They are Charles J. Roarty, geotechnical department manager in the Detroit office, and Kamal E. Daddah and Christopher J. Cruickshank, both project managers in the Farmington Hills office.

Steel expansion

Contractors Steel Co., with its main office in Livonia, will add a 35,000-square-foot addition to house new equipment, including a five-ton capacity stacker crane to access 1,500 steel storage compartments. The \$2-million project is slated for completion by mid-1993.

Deck House rep

Michael C. Meldrum Architect and Associates of Rochester is a design service representative of Deck House, the Acton, Mass., company whose contemporary post and beam "kit" houses range up to 14,000 square feet.

Pre-eminent dealer

Interior Dynamics, a full-service business interiors firm based in Troy, has been designated a pre-eminent dealer by the Knoll Group, a manufacturer of office systems and furnishings.

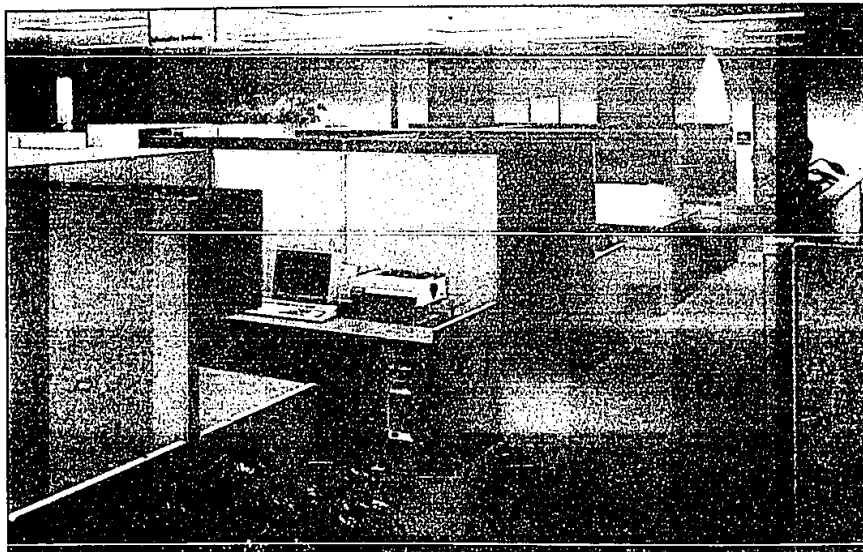
Interior Dynamics is one of 17 of Knoll's 196 dealers nationwide to achieve the initial honor.

Stanhardt moves

Stanhardt Design, which specializes in commercial and residential design and renovation, has relocated to 1010 N. Hunter Blvd. in Birmingham. The studio employs seven.

Leasing agent

Friedman Real Estate Group of Southfield has been named the leasing agent for The Southfield Collection, a group of seven office buildings in that community owned by Kojan Properties of Bloomfield Hills.



Rightizing: Fewer offices, more cubicles and a small budget for office art are some of the signs of the times as corporations change their buildings to match management styles.

Interiors reflect state of business



By R.J. KING
STAFF WRITER

Management efforts to streamline corporations are having an effect on the streamlining of offices too.

While no one is suggesting new interior designs incorporate wood planks, milk crates and cardboard, interior designers will continue to incorporate smaller offices, more work stations and less ostentation into their work as clients continue to hold the line on costs.

"Even though we see signs that the economy is starting to rebound, our clients are still very sensitive not only to the bottom line but also to the market they're doing business in," said Thomas Ernst, president and CEO of Ford & Earl Associates, a Troy commercial interior design firm, which had revenues of \$3 million last year.

Within the commercial interior design industry, the use of more work stations and other space-saving devices is known as rightizing, a catch-all term that refers not only to

workforce reductions but also the consolidation of facilities and operations.

From a fact sheet provided by Ford & Earl, rightizing has led to several trends in how designers plan the office spaces of tomorrow. The movement includes a reduction of private office space, more work stations, smaller-scale furniture and greater attention to ergonomic furnishings and space design.

"For a client planning a move, every department may ask for their own conference room, but only one might be approved. And for a client of ours in the health-care industry, which is doing very well, while they might have the budget for the expensive, they've been extremely conscious of practicality."

Chrysler Corp., which completed its 3.3-million-square-foot technology center in Auburn Hills, purposely kept individual offices to a minimum in favor of wide open spaces pocketed by work stations.

Costs, creativity concerns

The reason was two-fold: to promote the free flow of ideas and to cut down on costs. As a general rule, work stations are a much more efficient use of space, taking up a third of the room an office might occupy. Because of this, their use has soared in recent years, not only for secretaries and bookkeepers, but also account executives, entry-level professionals, even managers.

"The advent of the personal computer really spurred sales of the work station, because as companies continued to update their equipment, they couldn't very well continue to afford knocking down walls, getting permits and hiring contractors," said Jim Sturdy, commercial sales manager for ROP Business Interiors Inc. in Livonia.

Peter Jeff, a spokesman for Grand Rapids-based Steelcase, one of the world's largest office furniture makers, said sales of the company's Avenir product line, a mid-priced system of office furniture, have more than doubled since 1990. Steelcase operates a design studio in Southfield.

Other interior designers of office space have cited the same trends.

Fewer clients are ordering mahogany desks and leather chairs. Even once large art budgets are being curtailed in favor of less expensive creative offerings.

Practically speaking

The movement toward practicality is expected to continue well into the current economic recovery, said Ernst. No firm wants to take a chance on ordering rosewood furniture only to have the economy sputter and stall. The same goes for expensive frescoes and portraits.

For a client that recently moved to Auburn Hills, Ernst said his firm created small squares, circles and triangles from different colors of plaid to highlight interior halls in place of works by Degas or Warhol. Still, clients have not lost sight of quality.

"As far as selection goes, quality still rules," said Ernst. "Clients continue to favor natural wood doors as they wear better than paints and laminates."

"And for lobby floors, they might choose granite because it lasts much

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Builders, architects contend with anti-discrimination act

By R.J. KING
SPECIAL WRITER

The second phase of what has been called the most sweeping anti-discrimination law since the Civil Rights Act of 1964 goes into effect July 20, requiring small businesses to join their larger brethren in giving equal access to the disabled.

For area merchants, retailers and restaurant owners with 25 or fewer employees and annual revenues of more than \$1 million, the law, the Americans with Disabilities Act, means more than merely providing adequate parking spaces or ramps for the handicapped.

In restaurants, braille or large-type menus must be provided for the blind or visually impaired, or waiters may read the menus aloud; grocery stores have to provide lower display cases for the disabled; and movie theaters have to provide space for customers in wheelchairs.

While the act may prove costly to those who must comply, it does offer opportunities for area builders, contractors and architects by providing additional work orders at a time when the construction industry is showing signs of a rebound from a five-year lull in business.

"Anytime something is mandated by federal or state law, there will be a cost impact," said Tom Landry, president of the A.J. Etkin Construction Co. in Farmington Hills.

"We're just now seeing some of the provisions take effect. Under the law, new buildings (and

those undergoing major renovations) must be completely accessible to those with physical handicaps. In some cases, that means wider doors, making curb cuts in sidewalks and entrances, and installing flashing alarm lights."

Broad provisions

While it is up to architects and attorneys to interpret the law, some provisions are written so broadly that businesses are flocking to legal seminars armed with a checklist of items that include proper parking spaces, restroom and elevator accessibility, and the state of high pile, low density carpeting (it must be removed).

"You have to be very careful about what you build under the new law. We go over the drawings with a fine-tooth comb to make sure everything is in order," said Gene Belitani, president and co-owner of Carpentry By Mastercraft and Euro-Tile of Michigan, both based in Livonia.

"Already some of our commercial clients are calling to inquire about work they may need done to come in compliance with the act. And in the past, we've been very careful to see that such things as ramps are installed properly and with a gentle enough slope to accommodate wheelchairs and walkers."

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