

# BUILDING SCENE

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THURSDAY, APRIL 15, 1993

## BUILDING SCENE'S NAMES & PLACES

### NTH promotions

NTH Consultants of Farmington Hills has promoted Sheriff Afifi and Robert Gorman to vice president. Gorman was also elected to the firm's board of directors.

As an environmental department manager, Afifi provides technical direction for the department's staff of engineers, geologists, hydrogeologists and chemists. He has been with NTH since 1985 and has more than 29 years of professional engineering experience.

Gorman joined NTH as a staff geologist in 1979 and has served in project and management level positions. He currently serves as project consultant of hydrology services. As a member of the board of directors, he will assist in setting corporate policy for management of the firm.

NTH specializes in geotechnical and environmental engineering and building technology services.



Afifi



Gorman

### Property management

Axiom Real Estate Management is the newly formed joint venture of Grubb & Ellis and IBM in which Axiom is providing property and facilities management for IBM.

Axiom has inherited the former Grubb & Ellis national property management division and its network of offices in 26 markets across the country. IBM turned over 17 million square feet of its space to the new venture. The resulting 90 million square foot Axiom now manages is one of the largest property managers in the country.

Grubb & Ellis is the parent company with 70 percent of Axiom. IBM owns 25 percent, and 5 percent is owned by Axiom's senior officers.

Southfield is home to the Michigan headquarters and two satellite offices. Other Michigan offices are in Jackson, Birmingham and Troy. The main focus of the local business is office, industrial, retail and facilities management.

Information for inclusion in this column should be sent to Marilyn Fitchett, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150.

## Bathrooms polish old, stodgy image

Once the hidden room, the bathroom is making its own fashion statement.

By Doug Funke  
Special Writer

What is perhaps the most private room in the house is taking on a new dimension.

"The bathroom is not just a place to go and take care of business," said Bob O'Brien, general manager of Kurtis Kitchen & Bath Center in Livonia.

"They are now the heartbeat of the house," said Mary Ellen Vigna, showroom manager of Classic Baths in Birmingham. "You have a lot of two-income families who want something luxurious to relax in."

"One woman came in and said, 'My husband likes to sit in the tub and he has a telephone, TV and stereo right there.'"

"Bathrooms aren't hidden in homes," Vigna added. "Whirlpools look out over a window and onto a wooded lot."

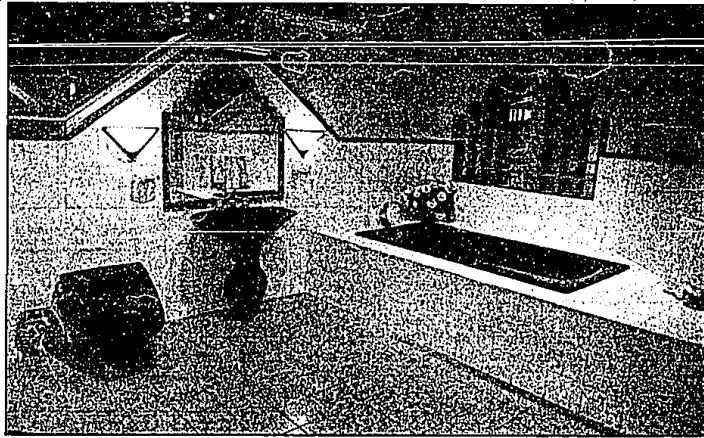
"People want a separate shower, a stall shower, and a whirlpool tub," said Ellen Whitefield, marketing director for the Selective Group of Farmington Hills.

"When we do that, we try for a dramatic window around the tub," she said. "Sometimes, we'll do a window that's half round on top. Sometimes it will be decorative."

"If it (bath) is upstairs, we're in good shape. If it's downstairs, we'll do something with glass blocks where you can't see in or out but you can get light," Whitefield said.

"Whether people use them (whirlpools) or not, they want them in the house," said Joyce MacLeish, a decorating specialist and vice president of a custom building company in Troy. "Deck tubs are absolutely a must, a flat surface surrounding on at least two sides where you can set plants or towels," she said.

Sherry Wheeler, a Jacuzzi consultant for a plumbing supply company, has seen tremendous growth in whirl-



STEPHEN CANTRELL/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Choices: Consumers have all kinds of choices, like this modern pedestal sink/toilet combination, when it comes to selecting style and color of bathroom fixtures. Showrooms like Classic Baths in Birmingham serve remodelers as well as builders of new residences.

pool tub sales in recent years.

"Six years ago, we sold 451. Last year, it was 2,038," she said. "On almost anything over 1,200 square feet, it's mandatory."

John Bollen Jr., a Troy builder, doesn't necessarily find that to be the case, though, in his \$159,000 to \$190,000 price range.

"I kind of think my buyers find things more important to them: upgraded windows, cabinet types, flooring, carpeting," he said.

Whirlpool prices vary according to size, material, jet stream and heating capacity. Wheeler's most popular standard model is six feet long, three

feet wide and 20 inches deep lists for about \$1,500.

But whirlpools aren't eyed only by buyers of new homes.

"A third of people coming by here ask about replacing an existing tub," Wheeler said at the recent International Builders Home, Flower and Furniture Show. "They don't want to knock out a wall, but they ask about what's available."

A five-foot whirlpool lists for as low as \$600. Some rewiring may be needed to install a whirlpool in an older house.

Safety concerns

"Another thing becoming very big

in the '90s for bathrooms is safety," Vigna said. "People want grab bars and higher toilets."

"That only makes sense, she added, when you consider concerns about getting in and out of a higher tub and the increased possibility of straining muscles and the onset of arthritis with aging."

"The biggest population is over 50, isn't it?" Vigna said.

There are all kinds of available sink basin styles. "China holds up better," she said. I think the finish will stay on longer."

See BATHROOMS, 2F

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