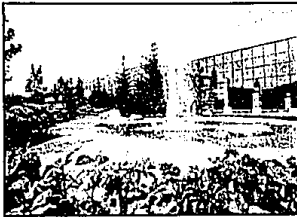


BUILDING SCENE

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THURSDAY, JULY 29, 1993

**BUILDING SCENE'S
NAMES &
PLACES**



Brookfield Office Park

Etkin honored

Southfield-based Etkin Equities won Suburban Office Park of the Year honors from the Building Owners and Managers Association for its work on the 350,000-square-foot Brookfield Office Park in Farmington Hills. The honor is given to buildings that demonstrate excellence in office building management, operations, community involvement, emergency evacuation procedures and design.

Brookfield's master plan and Buildings One and Three were designed by the late Minoru Yamasaki. Rosetti & Associates designed Building Two as the headquarters for Compuware. Brookfield also houses Cellular One, Reuters Information Services, Mass Mutual Companies, Octel Communications and M.O.R.-Pace.

Other Etkin buildings, like the Franklin Center, City Center Office Park and Timberland Office Park, have won BOMA honors in consecutive years dating back to 1987.

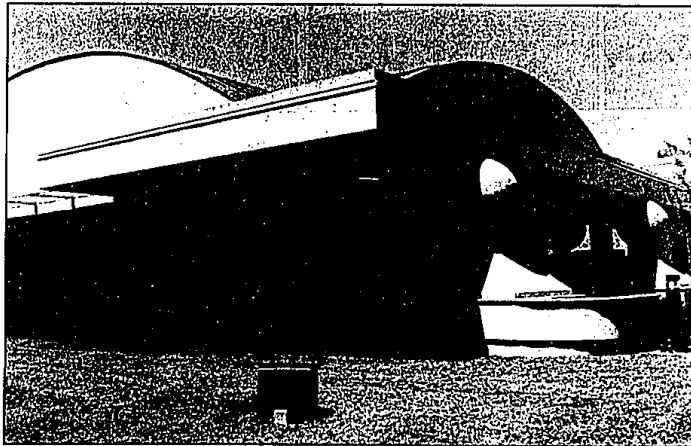
Complying with ADA

The Ann Arbor architectural firm of Culbertson Jacobs & Milling has been selected by First of America Bank to evaluate and correct 48 sites for compliance with the Federal Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA).

ADA specialist Christopher Pyzik will visit all First of America branches in Washtenaw, Wayne and Livingston counties.

Pyzik, who was heavily involved in church architecture helping the renovations of the First Presbyterian Church in Plymouth and Kirk in the Hills in Bloomfield Hills, will also be assisting University of Michigan Hospitals in its compliance with the act. He will review outpatient clinics in Brighton, Plymouth, Northville and Ann Arbor.

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



STAFF PHOTOS BY ART EMANUELE

Putting on a brand new face



By DOUG FUNKE
STAFF WRITER

Refurbishing may be the current buzz word in the construction industry here.

On the commercial side, an auto dealership in Southfield transforms into administrative headquarters for CEMS, an ambulance service. Troy Commons, a strip shopping center, receives a makeover and an Ethan Allen furniture store in Livonia gets an upscale look.

Architectural Exterior Finishers in Redford was responsible for all of those projects.

Robert Mantua, president/owner started off in the remodeling business and said he was one of the first to jump into exterior finishing when that specialty evolved a few years ago.

"There's an increased need for image," he said. "Appearance in the marketplace is important for tenants

and owners. And it is more economical than new, obviously."

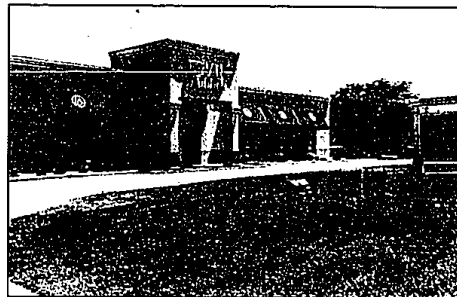
Renovations can come in at 20 percent of the costs of building from the ground up, Mantua said.

More good than bad

Several exterior insulation finishing systems — Senergy, Dryvit and Sto — are available. They're basically the same.

Expanded polystyrene (Styrofoam) sheets which can be cut and routed into various shapes and design are cemented to the wall of the existing structure. A reinforcing mesh is attached to these sheets and a liquid acrylic plaster finish, which comes in a variety of colors, is then brushed onto the mesh where it hardens.

"The advantages are that this stuff is very flexible," Mantua said. "It can expand and contract more than any other building material."



There are some drawbacks. The plaster can be applied only if the temperature is at least 40 degrees, the work is labor intensive and the outside shell is prone to cutting over time, Mantua said.

Still, the pluses outweigh the minuses in his mind.

"In remodeling a building with many different phases, this makes it all look like one phase. It brings it all together," Mantua said. "The main benefit is durability to weather and ability to use many colors . . . and unlimited shapes."

The cost is about the same as brick — \$8 a square foot, he said.

IMAGE MAKER

Face left: Architectural Exterior Finishers' portfolio includes the Community EMS building in Troy (left) which was converted from an auto dealership, and Ethan Allen store in Livonia (below), which got an upscale image that brought the furniture store into the 1990s.

A custom fit

Mantua said he got started in exterior finishing work in the mid 1980s when he was hired to install smaller windows in many Plymouth/Canton school buildings.

He figured that he could put in the windows, studs and trim and leave the exterior finishing work to someone else. He figured wrong. So Mantua did some research, did the job himself and became a convert.

Now, others do the work, Mantua said, but none as much on-site, custom work as he does.

See EXTERIORS, 3F

Office market has hit bottom, starting on road to recovery?

By DOUG FUNKE
STAFF WRITER

At least one analyst eyeing leasing activity through the first six months of this year believes that the sluggish metro office market has bottomed out and is on the road to recovery.

Some pockets like Farmington Hills and Livonia are faring better than others like Troy and Southfield, reported Joel Feldman, senior vice president and broker with the Nobilo/Advantage Group in Southfield.

"The key to the resurrection of our local multi-tenanted office market . . . will continue to be absorption — the net decrease in the current oversupply of office product," Feldman wrote.

How?
"Continued abatement of new, speculative office development coupled with the expansion of companies already present in our area as well as attracting new businesses to our community on a massive scale," Feldman reported.

The task won't be easy, Feldman warned. He called upon business and governmental notables already here to lead an expansion of local commerce and attract new business.

"I've been on numerous committees and attended numerous meetings," he said. "I've made it very clear to them I think the state of Michigan and city of Detroit have done a very poor job attracting new business to our area. It's been a chronic problem."

Occupancy rates range from 94 percent in Bingham Farms to just under 75 percent in Southfield, Feldman said. The average for the entire metro area was 82 percent.

Here's a capsule look at the office situation as of July 1 in several O&E communities as provided by Feldman.

FARMINGTON HILLS

Termed the best model of dealing with problems of overbuilding and foreclosure in metro Detroit, this market has tightened considerably in the last year.

Occupancy levels have improved dramatically in buildings like Village Park, Wellington Place North C, Hunters Square and Westfield.

"Competitive rental rates, good hands-on management, aggressive leasing agents and the financial wherewithal to do tenant build-outs" sparked the turnaround, Feldman reported.

Two other factors — brokers hustling to find user/investors to buy troubled properties and aggressive marketing through lease renewals — also paid dividends.

WESTERN LIVONIA

Progress in filling vacancies along the I-275 corridor continued through the first six months of 1993.

A general tightening-up has occurred throughout the community.

"Aggressive rental rates, the retention of existing tenants and the modernization of some older buildings are major reasons for this," Feldman reported.

"A significant and disproportionate amount of existing leases expire (this year) and accordingly landlords here must spend a good deal of time and money while focusing their attention on this fact," Feldman indicated.

TROY

This community's office market is the most troubled in the metro area, according to Feldman's analysis.

"Troy today is fraught with serious problems officewise, exemplified by a record amount of vacant office buildings, a record amount of vacant office space and a record amount of foreclosures," he reported.

Demand simply exceeds supply and will only get worse as National Bank of Detroit and GM move a significant amount of employees out of town in the next few years.

In spite of the glut, landlords here are wise to go easy on granting concessions, Feldman indicated.

"This approach will . . . serve as a strong deterrent from allowing Troy's current problems to reappear," he wrote.

Progress will be slow in the short term, however.

SOUTHFIELD

This market was as active as any in the area through the first six months of the year, but the results were mixed.

"It is becoming more and more clear that Southfield's size and age inherently cause it to chronically experience a vicious circle," Feldman reported. "As one problem is solved, another appears."

Part of it has to do with the immaturity of the market.

Some progress has been made in the southern tier through "major renovations and excellent management together with aggressive rental rates," Feldman indicated.

See RECOVERY, 3F

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