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the NOVI NEWS

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City gives go ahead to revised plans

By JAN JEFFRES
Staff Writer

While a county circuit court judge has yet to render a decision in a \$80 million lawsuit brought by the Sandstone Associates against the City of Novi, two new players have entered the case.

Monday night, the Novi City Council approved a consent agreement enabling Singh Development Company and the Fram Building Group to buy over half of the 297-acre property and construct 424 homes at the Vistas, which was once celebrated as Novi's venture into neotraditional planning.

"We're in a very bad situation in a very bad lawsuit against the city," Council Member Craig Deloche said.

"This is at least 100 times better. It's less density. It's well planned. It's with a firm that at least can do what they say."

Assistant City Attorney Dennis Watson said the city's okay of the agreement will have a "tangential effect" on the lawsuit. Hughlan contends the city hindered their efforts to realize the Vistas concept at the property bounded by Twelve Mile and Thirteen Mile and Novi and Meadowbrook roads.

"Among the things they (Sandstone) are claiming is a complete loss of the property. In effect, they claim they can't improve it at all," Watson said.

"If this goes through, it's obvious the property is being developed and as the sale goes through, they receive the revenues... They are apparently attempting to liquidate the property and sell large portions."

Sandstone Associates, affiliated with the Hughes Properties and developers Ron Hughes and David

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Vandals target holiday decorations

By JEREMY MCBAIN
Staff Writer

Many Novi residents with their homes decorated for the holidays, found a sergeant attacked their Christmas spirit by destroying their decorations.

There have been a number of destructive activities involving Christmas decorations throughout the city this month. The Novi Police said part of the reason may be because people are decorating their homes more this year.

Lt. Tim McNamara of the Novi Police Department, said the destruction — which generally includes cutting strings of lights, destroying bulbs, knocking over decorations or stealing decorations — has not happened a lot in the past.

But, this year there is an extremely large amount of Christmas decorations around the city, McNamara said. This is perhaps the reason for an increase in the

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Welcome Santa

Not only was Santa given a key to the city in the Light Up the Holidays ceremony Monday evening in the Novi Civic Center, kids got a chance to give him their wish list and even meet a few of his reindeer.

Photos by TOM HIBBELN

Yikes!

Novi Woods Elementary School student Lauren Buckley got a surprise when Peter Hoke wrapped an Australian Carpet Python around her shoulders Friday afternoon during a visit to her classroom by the Science Alive!



Photo by JOHN HEIDER

County signs on to Beck project

By JAN JEFFRES
Staff Writer

The Oakland County Road Commission has joined the team.

With the state firming up its commitment to rebuilding the Beck Road and Wixom Road I-96 interchanges in four years, Novi officials were concerned that the county wasn't ready to do the companion road improvements to

Grand River Avenue.

But Monday, officials from the road commission came on line during a meeting of the Beck Road Task Force held in Novi, City Manager Ed Krjewall said.

In January or early February, a public hearing on the environmental impact statement for the freeway projects is expected to be scheduled by the Michigan Department of Trans-

portation.

"If there's a finding of no significant impact, they can go on to the final design," Krjewall said.

"They're committed to building the project in a hurry."

A 2001 or 2002 construction date is anticipated.

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City gives approval to store expansions

By JAN JEFFRES
Staff Writer

Shoppers who enjoy Kohl's and Jo-Ann Fabrics will soon have double the pleasure.

Both West Oaks II businesses won approval Monday for major expansion plans which will convert the one-story stores to two levels.

Martha Stewart wanna-bes who mourned when Michael's moved out of Novi Town Cen-

ter will be delighted to learn that Jo-Ann Fabrics will disappear altogether, to be replaced by the chain's new superstore concept, Jo-Ann etc (everything that's creative.)

A bigger Kohl's, comparable to the new one in Northville Township, was a plus for Council Member Kathy Mutch, who noted that the store "will actually have aisles to walk through."

"We're trying to bring the 1989 decor into 1998," explained Tom Peterson, construction project manager for Kohl's.

Keith Blum, architect for the mall's developers, Ramco Gershenson, said one year ago Kohl's told its landlords it wanted to expand. The firm approached Jo-Ann's and asked them if they'd be interested in moving and instead

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Christmas Trees!

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in The
Green Sheet

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Somebody's watchin' you

Looking for shoplifters, security keeps tabs on customers

By JEREMY MCBAIN
Staff Writer

According to the Oakland County Prosecutor's Office, Twelve Oaks department store Lord and Taylor is in the gray area of a privacy law.

Three police reports indicate observations were made in dressing rooms but there are no signs warning customers that they may be watched. According to Oakland County Chief Deputy Prosecutor

■ Some shoppers say they wouldn't do business with a store that watched customers in dressing rooms. The story appears on page 24A.

John O'Brien, that may make the practice illegal.

But O'Brien said the dressing

room stall door design may put Lord and Taylor's observation tactics in the clear.

While Lord and Taylor does not have an observation room or camera to watch dressing rooms, the most probable way for security personnel to see in is through the doors, according to Novi Police Officer Vere Wirwille.

Wirwille said such an observation technique would be used only if the store already had an idea

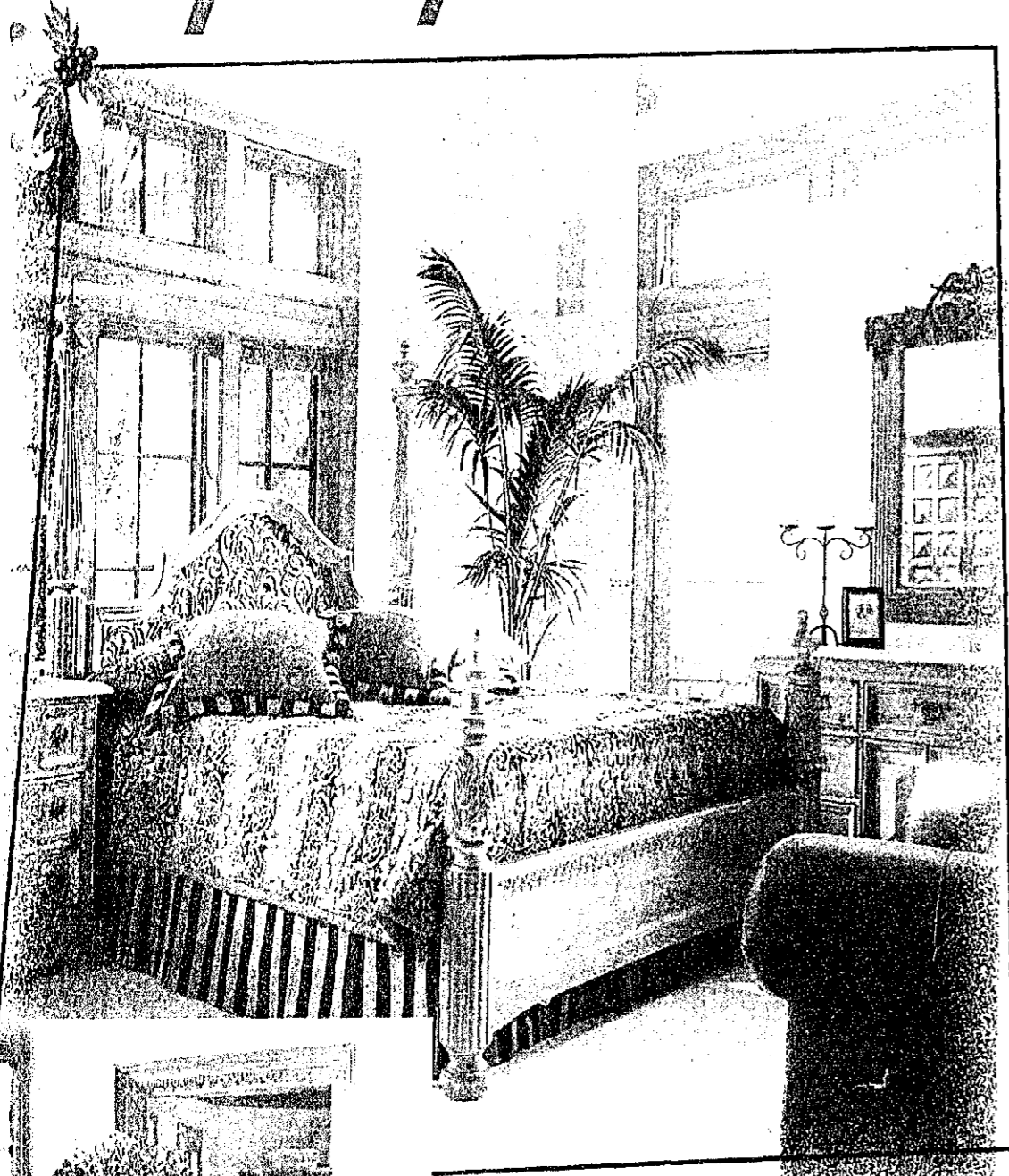
that the shopper was attempting to steal merchandise.

Each door in the dressing room stalls have wooden slats — like fixed Venetian blinds — for a front. Because of the door's design, Wirwille said someone standing outside can see in, just enough to track basic movements, while the person inside cannot see out.

Wirwille said, it is not a privacy

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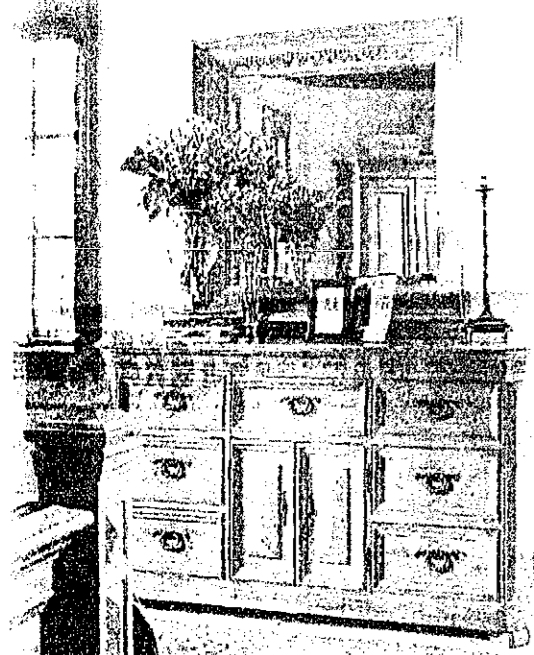
McLaughlin's Gifts for the Home



This Santiago bedroom set can only be described as masterful. It is designed with a power and scale capable of eliciting strong emotions. There is an elegance and grace that underlies each piece.

This distinctive Spanish style is distinguished by the hand-worked, distressed Casa Vieja finish in a lavishly grained pine that loves large, sun-warmed spaces. To accompany the intricately carved canted post king sized bed, is an immense Triple Dresser which is augmented with a beautifully beveled mirror framed by wood and decorative metal ornamentation. And finally, a Armoire with raised pyramid shaped panels and sized to hide the biggest of treasures.

Santiago Bedroom Set 3 pieces (canted post king size bed, triple dresser with mirror & armoire)
msrp \$10920 Holiday Priced \$5995

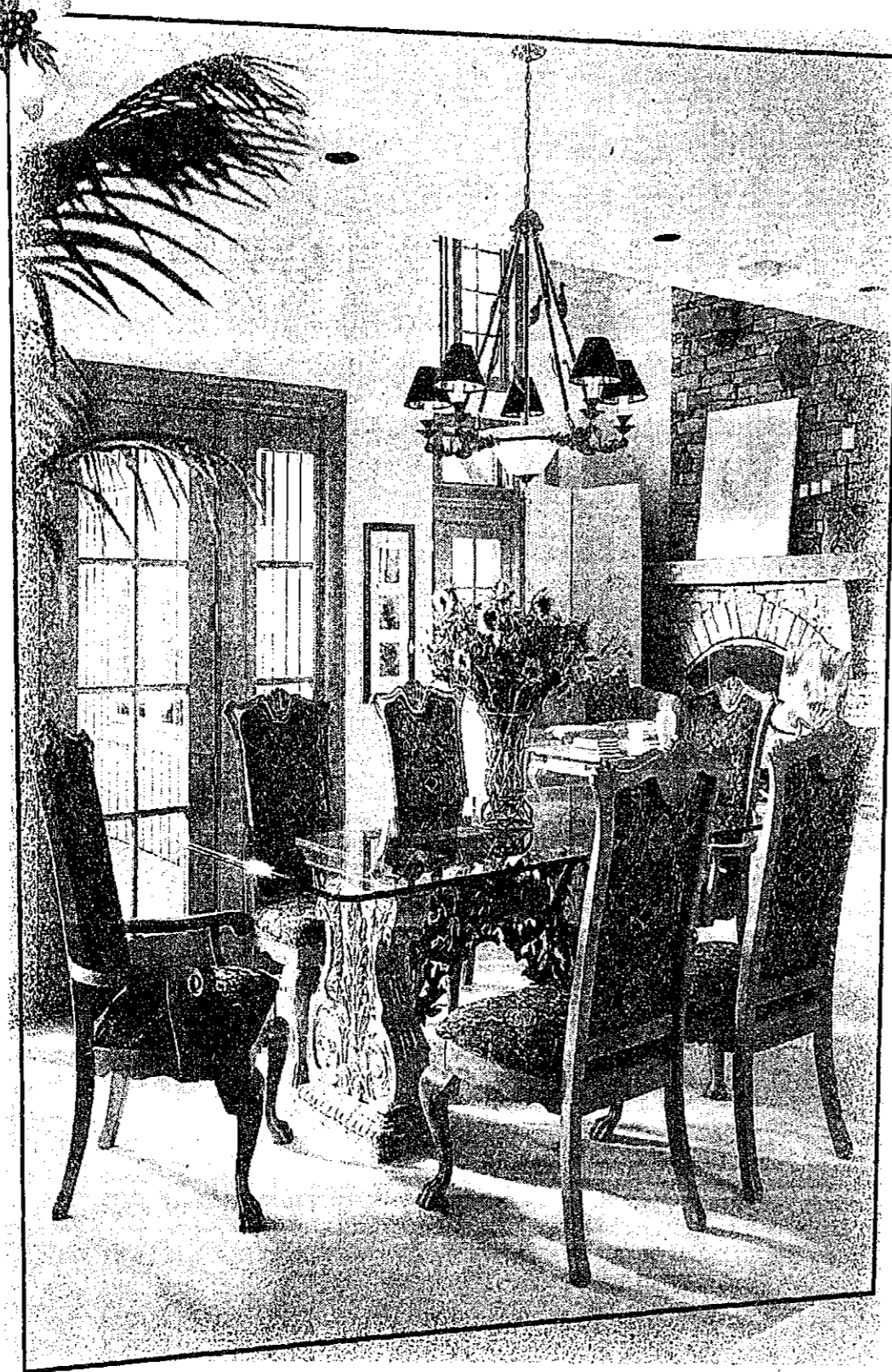


triple dresser

This Santiago dining room set is for those who live life on a grand scale. This unique Spanish-influenced design pays tribute to European traditional styling while contradicting it with bold, oversized features. The crowning touch of this room is the glass top dining table with its intricate cast stone base. The chairs, with their fabulous flowing lines are like works of art.



Santiago Dining Room Set (table with 4 chairs and 4 arm chairs)
msrp \$7740 Holiday Priced \$4265



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Hearing set on Ramco plan to fill wetlands

by JAN JEFFRES
Staff Writer

To build a new mega-mall entertainment center, developers Ramco-Gersthenson Properties Trust will need to fill over five acres of wetlands on the south side of Twelve Oaks Mall, just west of the company's existing West Oaks shopping center.

On Tuesday, December 15 at 7 p.m., the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality will hold a public hearing on the application

at the Novi Civic Center. Ramco plans to haul in 53,950 cubic yards of fill material to the wetlands and then mitigate the loss at a 1.5 to one ratio on city-owned land north of Twelve Mile Road.

Les Thomas, of the DEQ's Land and Water Management Division scheduled the hearing because a member of the public requested it.

"The statute does provide for holding public hearings if people ask for one and provide a public resource for the hearing," Thomas

explained.

According to the DEQ application, Ramco will need to build over eight acres of wetlands. The new mall will be the biggest in Novi, after Twelve Oaks. Along with a multiplex theater, the 676,885 square foot retail center will include five restaurants on the 70-acre site.

Five acres is a lot of wetlands to fill in, Thomas said.

"We generally try to keep them

down to as little as possible," he explained.

Typically, in a built-up region, sensitive lands are the last vacant acreage and are avoided because of the high costs attached to development, including wetlands mitigation, he added.

"When an area is so developed, often the only areas left are the ones no one wanted to touch," Thomas said.

Last summer, the Novi City

Council agreed that the developer could construct a mitigation site at public land held at the West Road Wastewater Treatment Plant, as well as adjacent land bought with road bond money. The city will need to do wetlands mitigation there for the Taft Road Extension.

Ramco Gersthenson will write the check for the costs of the new wetlands, which is expected to be about \$120,000 per acre. The city will build the new wetlands and bill

the developers.

State law provides for wetlands land banking.

"I don't know if there has been many instances of wetlands banking. We try to determine wetlands mitigation on a case-by-case basis," Thomas said.

For information on the application and hearing, contact Thomas at the DEQ's Land and Water Management Division, 517-335-3464.

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School budget shows millage decrease of \$2

By JEREMY McBAIN
Staff Writer

Due to changes in the Novi school district's budget, residents will be seeing a lower millage levy than last year.

Jim Koster, assistant superintendent for business and operations, said the amended budget, if accepted by the Novi school board Dec. 17, gives 17,121.3 for a millage levy on homesteads. This means a home with a total value of \$100,000 would pay \$856.07.

The levy is down .057 from last year.

The result will be a \$2.85 savings for the owner of that \$100,000

home.

Koster said this is particularly surprising because residents will have a lower millage to pay even though a new school bond was passed last March.

And, Koster said he expects the millage levy will go down further in next year's budget.

The lower millage levy is the result of several factors, the most basic of which is Proposal A.

Koster said Proposal A, which was passed in 1995, changed the funding formula for public schools in the state of Michigan.

The proposal placed a cap on Michigan homesteads at \$591 and

changed the way the state doled out money from its tax coffers to schools.

However, 37 school districts in the state -- Novi included -- were given additional help by being placed in a category called "Hold Harmless."

As a Hold Harmless, if the school district has a greater tax yield number than total of \$591 times the number of students in the school, the school district must lower its millage rate.

Under this tactic, the state spends a certain amount of money per student. Whatever the millage does not cover, the state then

makes up the difference, Koster said.

Because the process uses student growth and homestead taxable values in its formula, funding and the millage levy has a lot to do with the growth of a community and the economy.

What this means is; if the economy remains as it is, the school continues to grow in student numbers and school expenses stay moderate, the millage levy will continue to go down, Koster said.

But, parents need not worry that the school has less money this year, because while this year's millage levy has gone down this year,

Koster said the school budget shows more good news in the form of additional state aid per student.

Koster said a one-time "off schedule" funding increase of \$51 per student in each Michigan district was awarded this fall.

The state was supposed to pay \$7,553 per student this year. This was the same amount of funding per student as the 1997-98 school year.

Koster said the state usually increases per student funding each year, in conjunction with rising costs of living. That was not the case this year, at first.

Perhaps because they realized

this or more likely some political factors, Koster said the state decided, right around election time, to add \$51 to every Michigan public school student's funding for this school year only.

This gives the school \$7,604 per student or an additional \$280,220 to the student budget.

Because the funding was added this fall, Koster said he has not had been able to determine how this additional funding affects the rest of the school budget.

"We will start playing around with the numbers after Christmas," Koster said.

Detroit income tax cut by bill

By TIM RICHARD
Staff Writer

After days of back-room maneuvering, the state House of Representatives produced bills that will protect Detroit's share of state revenues but cut its city income tax.

Suburbanites working in Detroit would see their city income tax rates drop from the current 1.5 percent to 1 percent over 10 years -- if the House bills become law.

Gov. John Engler was visible after meetings with the House Republican caucus on behalf of the state-Detroit deal. But Rep. Judith Seranton, R-Brighton, said, "You didn't hear any bones cracking in my caucus," meaning Engler's pressure was light.

The House on Dec. 3:

- Overwhelmingly approved a bill paring Detroit's city personal income tax over 10 years. Residents will see their rate drop from 3 to 2 percent; non-residents from 1.5 to 1 percent, under HB 5391. (Detroit's council and mayor could cut the tax unilaterally, but future officials could raise it again. Detroit has a special state law that permits it to levy the high rates.)

- Approved 58-33 a revenue-sharing bill that freezes Detroit's share at \$334 million and revises the formula to help suburban and rural areas.

The House revenue-sharing bill will get a harsh reception in the Senate, where Glenn Steil, R-Grand Rapids, is beating the drums to cut Detroit's aid over six years to \$281 million.

Steil pictures Detroit as a city with 10 percent of the state's population gobbling up 25 percent of the shared revenue. He sees Detroit's being rewarded for losing population while having the highest property, local income and utility taxes in the state while "growth" areas foot the bill. The Senate passed his version of revenue sharing last summer on 30-6 vote.

Metro area politicians see the Steil bill as fueling "urban sprawl" by subsidizing rural areas with low local taxes.

Reps. Patricia Godechaux, R-Birmingham, and Lyn Bankes, R-Redford, voted against the revenue sharing bill in the House Appropriations Committee Dec. 2 but for it on Dec. 3 when the full House adopted it. Their reasons were identical.

"I got the bill (in committee) at 4:10 and had to vote at 5:30," said Godechaux, a freshman member. "People I rely on couldn't answer questions, (such as) what's going to happen two years after the 2000 census? But many of my municipalities will support it -- Beverly Hills and Birmingham -- because they want to stabilize their revenue and they don't want to hurt Detroit."

Godechaux said the bill isn't finished yet. It goes to the Senate, where agreement is doubtful, and back to the House for concurrence (maybe) in Senate amendments. The Legislature is scheduled to close up shop Dec. 22.

Bankes also voted no in committee because of the rush job. "The Michigan Municipal League, Michigan Townships Association and Michigan Association of Counties had not had the bill long enough to do an analysis," said Bankes, who is term-limited out. Her effort to protect Detroit and Wayne County, however, will help her politically when she takes office Jan. 1 as a Wayne County commissioner.

Rep. Nancy Cassis, R-Novi, voted yes.

Michigan has two revenue sharing pieces of legislation:

The constitution, which distributes \$558 million per year on a per-capita basis. The money comes from a portion of the sales tax. Only the voters can change it.

A 1971 law, which spreads \$792 million on the basis of a complicated formula that takes account of "relative tax effort." Steil calls that a "perverse incentive of giving more revenue sharing dollars to communities that increase taxes."

The Steil bill cutting Detroit aid is SB 1181. The House bill freezing it is HB 5989 and is sponsored by Nick Ciaramitaro, D-Roseville.

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Senate approves Hall of Justice Some calling the project a waste of money

By **TIM RICHARD**
Staff Writer

To Chief Justice Conrad Mallett Jr., it's a giant step forward in overhauling the appellate courts.

To many legislators, it will be a palatial Taj Mahal costing taxpayers \$2 million per judge who uses it.

The Senate Dec. 1 approved a capital outlay that provides \$88 million for a new Hall of Justice building west of the Capitol in Lansing to house the Supreme Court (seven justices) and Court of Appeals (28 judges). The House is due to vote this week.

"It gives us a physical presence," said Mallett, of West Bloomfield, who personally lobbied senators for passage of the bill.

"The bureaucrats can resist change of emphasis and procedure (by physical isolation). I can't get them to solve their problems without physical proximity. But I can set the tone in terms of where people sit."

Mallett likened the single new building to General Motors Chairman Jack Smith's decision to move his office to the GM Tech Center so he could be closer to the company's action.

When the State Capitol was built in 1879, the Supreme Court had a

third-floor chamber. Tourists still see an engraved sign proclaiming "Supreme Court." It's now used for Senate Appropriations Committee meetings.

In recent years, the highest court has several floors in what used to be called the Law Building, about two blocks west of the Capitol. This year it was renamed the G. Meinen Williams Building, for the man who served 12 years as governor and 16 years as a justice. The Williams Building also houses the state law library, Attorney General's office and regulatory departments of state government.

The Court of Appeals' headquarters, however, is in a building a block east of the Capitol on several upper floors.

Mallett and Gov. John Engler say the appellate courts will work better if they and the court administrator are closer to each other. Court of Appeals judges say they can coordinate decisions better if they're located closer together.

The Senate passed the bill 24-11 and sent it to the House. Sens. Bill Bullard Jr., R-Milford, voted yes.

Sen. Gary Peters, D-Bloomfield Township, said he voted for the bill because it also contained money to

demolish the old Clinton Valley Center, a 19th Century mental health facility in Pontiac.

"Part of the land will go to Oakland County government. The remainder will be sold to a private developer because (the city of) Pontiac wants upscale residential housing," he said.

But Peters was unhappy about the high cost of the court building. "I voted for the Jaye amendment to strip down the court project."

Sen. Dave Jaye, R-Macomb County, stuck the "Taj Mahal" tag on the project. His amendment would have removed \$15 million for an underground parking garage and prohibited the building of a restaurant and restrooms not open to the public.

"This massive Judicial Palace costs around \$269 per square foot," Jaye said. "These arrogant judges are trying to stuff hardworking taxpayer dollars into this \$87.8 million project. Government leadership is trying to plow this palace through in the last six days of the 1998 session."

Jaye's amendment failed in an unrecorded vote.

Sen. Mike Rogers, R-Brighton, joined another senator in protesting the high cost of the project but said,

"I think we need a new hall of justice." He blamed the Department of Management and Budget rather than the courts for running up the project's cost.

JURY BILL HAILED

Michigan residents will find it harder to avoid jury duty under House Bill 6287 that was reported out of the House Judiciary Committee.

Lists of potential jurors would be drawn from the Secretary of State's qualified voter file. That file includes registered voters, drivers license and state identification card holders.

Some people avoid jury duty by changing residences after they receive a court summons to appear for service. Others believe they can avoid jury duty by not registering to vote.

"Jury service is one of the most important roles that we have as citizens of a democracy," said Mallett, who supported the bill. "The diversity of the community reflected in jury service enhances impartial decision-making and is essential to public confidence in the justice system."

The bill still faces votes by the full House and Senate.

Jaycees seeking holiday donations

The Novi Jaycees are seeking cash donations to prepare holiday baskets -- filled with clothing, toys, canned food and perishable food items -- for 40 families in the city that otherwise would have no holiday in their homes.

The Jaycees are asking for those donations by Friday, Dec. 11, to allow the group time to set budgets and finish shopping in time for the scheduled Saturday, Dec. 19, delivery date.

The names of the families are gathered from area food banks, schools and churches. The Jaycees then contact the family to verify need, establish the family's "wish list" and make arrangements for delivery of the baskets.

To help, call the Jaycees at 348-NOVI. A member of the group

will return your call. Donations can be sent to the Novi Jaycees at P.O. Box 249, Novi, MI 48376.

For the past 20 years, the Jaycees have delivered baskets to needy Novi families on the Saturday before Christmas. The Jaycees are assisted in their task by Novi school children, who bring canned goods to school, Girl Scouts who run a bake/auction at the City of Novi Christmas tree lighting ceremony, and local residents and business owners who donate funds.

The Jaycees is a leadership training organization for adults between the ages of 21 and 39. If you are interested in becoming more involved in Novi and would like information on the Jaycees, call 348-NOVI.

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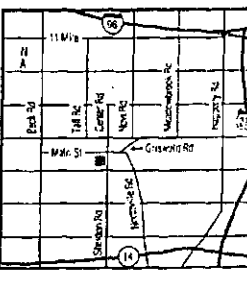
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N'ville's student numbers pass official expectations

By WENDY WHITE
Staff Writer

The number of children in Northville just keeps growing and growing and growing.

Beyond the expectations, even, of school officials and the experts they hired to chart student population.

Even at their highest, Stauffer projections came in more than 90 students under the district's enrollment.

Despite the statistical faux pas, the district was able to meet class size goals set by the Northville Board of Education in 1996.

The goals aim for classes with an average of 22 kindergarten students, 24 first through fifth graders, and 26 middle and high school students.

about three.

That's with 328 more students than the district had that year.

The district's enrollment was at 4,470 students in 1975-76 but steadily declined to a low of 3,251 in 1985-86.

That marked a pivotal year for the district, which has seen growth ever since.

Enrollment is now at a record high with nearly 4,800 students in Northville's standard public schools.

Most of the growth is occurring at the elementary school level and school officials expect that growth to continue, as 3,000 homes are under construction along the Six Mile Road corridor.

"The information is clear. We're growing. The data identified, as we studied prior to the bond election, that we're in a fast period of growth. We have more staff and more kids than we've had historically," said school superintendent Leonard Bezmanski.

All the more reason that Stauffer projections need to be correct.

Founded by two Michigan State

University statistics professors, the company bases projections on live birth rates.

"I don't think the live birth rate is growing here," Boltko said. "If the economy continues to grow and Northville remains a desirable community as it is and as it has been, we will get a larger percentage of families with school age children, especially at the elementary level, than the projections will show."

Boltko has asked Stauffer founder Fred Ignatowich to reformulate the projections.

Bond proposals which allow the district to build more schools or add additional are based on those figures.

The \$61.5 million issue passed in 1996, for example, afforded a six classroom expansion of Silver Springs and construction of a brand new high school with classroom capacity for 1,800 students, and common spaces built for 2,200.

It will also retrofit the high school so that the Cooke Middle School program can take over and spread out.



Photo by JOHN HEIDER

Sing merrily

A combined chorale group of Northville Meads and Cooke Middle schools sings Friday evening's Northville's All Aglow tree lighting ceremony at the city's bandshell downtown. The event marks the official kick off of the holiday season for the city of Northville.



Photos by JOHN HEIDER

Christmas in Novi

(Left)The main center court of Novi's Twelve Oaks Mall sports a huge Christmas Tree and other holiday decorations as real shopping gets underway the day after Thanksgiving. (Above) The Alley family - from the small town of Jerome, 10 miles south of Jackson - take a breather from post-Thanksgiving Day buying Friday afternoon at Twelve Oaks Mall near their pile of shopping bags. They are, from left, Mandy, Connie, Linda and Joene. (Right) Hoping to voice their Christmas wishes, a couple of youngsters sit on Santa Claus's lap last Friday afternoon at Twelve Oaks Mall.



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Northville's Santa suit is mysteriously missing

By WENDY WHITE
Staff Writer

With a new Santa House and Housing Homeless Holidays Lighted Parade, Northville businesses thought they were well prepared to welcome Santa Claus to town.

That was until a last-minute discovery proved they were wrong and threatened to leave Father Christmas out in the cold.

When the Northville Community Chamber of Commerce and Northville Central Business Association went to unpack Santa's suit last month, they found it was gone.

Although arrangements were quickly made to clothe St. Nick during his Northville visits, the mystery of the missing Santa suit has yet to be solved.

The Chamber was very distraught. That was the end of our Santa suit, never to be found again," said Chamber of Commerce director Laurie Marrs.

The suit is size extra, extra large and described as red with white trim, a very long belt, black leather boots and a pointed hat with a white tassel on the end.

Two years old, it was purchased

by the Northville Chamber of Commerce with revenue from fund raising events.

Straight from Bronner's Christmas headquarters in Frankenmuth, it cost more than a just a few foil-wrapped chocolate coins, according to Marrs.

"Wally (Bronner) told us it was the best suit he carried. We were convinced it would last for years and years," Marrs said. "I'm definitely going to have to get busy looking up detective agencies to uncover this valuable piece of Chamber property."

So far, clues have led investigators through a maze of possibilities that trace the Santa suit through

the hands of elves, dry cleaners and all of a sudden we went to get it and it was gone. Poor Santa!"

A check of the basement of The Kitchen Witch proved to be a dead end and although Mainstreet Cleaners laundered the suit annually, the missing leather accessories ruled out that lead.

Marrs said she suspects the suit is just temporarily misplaced.

"He'd have jinxed and get dressed behind the stage. I used to peek behind the curtain," Genitt said. "I gave the Santa suit back to the Chamber of Commerce last year because I didn't want to be responsible for it. I don't think anyone really knows where it went. We thought it was at the Kitchen Witch

and rented a suit from Costumes Plus in Plymouth until the NBA spent \$250 to order a new one.

"The Chamber of Commerce and Northville Central Business Association are working arm in arm to make this a wonderful Christmas for everyone," Genitt said. "We have a lot of people making this Christmas the best ever, making kids happy. I've never seen so much activity with Santa. He's living in style. He's got a new house and a new suit what else does he want?"

Despite his generous nature, Santa wasn't inclined to provide his own suit in the meantime.

"If I did that everywhere, the

cleaning bill would be absolutely astronomical," Santa said. "You never know with kids. They're unpredictable. That's why I like them, they're unpredictable."

"I do bring my own underwear and socks," Santa said he has no idea what happened to the suit, but doesn't understand how such a garment could go missing.

"It seems kind of strange to me that someone wouldn't know that the big red suit in their closet, size X-X-L, doesn't belong to them," Santa Claus said. "I realize that people make mistakes but it's obviously not your everyday business wear."

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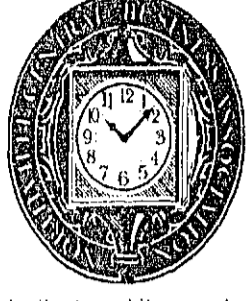
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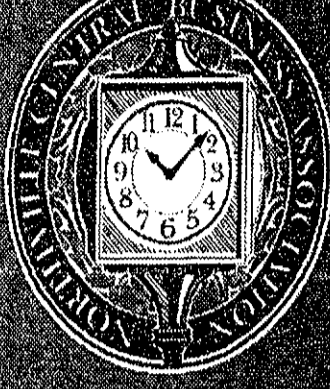
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Information provided by the Northville Central Business Association and the Northville Record

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NEWS

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THURSDAY
December 10,
1998

Not sure what to give?
Make your shopping easy
with a custom
made-in-Michigan

Gift Basket

By CAROL DIPPLE
Feature Editor

It is a common dilemma this time of year - what to give to people who say they have everything. An edible gift is sometimes the way to go. "You know they are going to eat it and enjoy it, not put it away in a closet and never use it," said first-time business owner Geri Turnbull.

In one of the smallest stores in Northville, customers can get not only food items, but Michigan-made edibles.

Turnbull considered buying Your Michigan Connection earlier this year, after K mart offered her a buyout ending her more than 18-year retail career.

"I walked in here and laughed," Turnbull said when she first toured the business. "It is the skimmiest store."

Some of the products packed into the six-foot wide store are the American Spoon items including cherry, apple and pumpkin butters; chutney; barbecue sauces; mango salsa; and a line of chilies.

"American Spoon has been around a really long time," said Turnbull. "People that vacation up in the Peloskey area come into my store because I carry American Spoon."

Turnbull can also box and ship a customer's selection.

Other Michigan-made food items include Sanders, including the new Sanders Original Hot Fudge Coffee; jams and jellies from Brownwood Acres;

fudge from both Mackinac Island and Parmenter Cider Mill; Old Geezer Soup, a dried soup mix made in Leelanau; as well as Fireside Coffee made in Swartz Creek.

"I am always looking for new things," said Turnbull. "I want people to come to me because I'm unique."

Turnbull frequently hears from her customers that their selection is for someone who has everything or they don't know what to buy for them.

Customers can select from among a variety of baskets which are hanging from the ceiling of the store at 136 N. Center or they can call (248) 380-9292 and



Above and left: Geri Turnbull offers a variety of Michigan-made edibles in her Northville store called Your Michigan Connection.

Photos by JOHN HEIDER



Gifts of cooking wine, nuts, spices and cookies are packaged by the Williams-Sonoma employees.



the Williams-Sonoma store at Twelve Oaks Mall for about a year.

Williams-Sonoma also has gift sets which include everything but the kitchen sink.

For pasta lovers, there's the pasta gift set which includes a four quart multi-pot, Boccolotti pasta, tomato paste, organic crushed tomatoes, apron and pasta forks.

If you're into pizza, there's a gift set that includes all the basics necessary to create a homemade pizza including the deep-dish pan and red-and-white checked apron.

A popcorn gift set does not include a microwave oven but an old-fashioned, stove-top Whirley Pop popper as well as three varieties of popping corn.

For information at Williams-Sonoma, call 380-6280.

Great Harvest Bread Co. has bread, muffin and cookie gift baskets, some of which include a gift card for a complimentary loaf of bread. Other holiday gift ideas at Great Harvest include a loaf of bread wrapped in mylar, and a combo bag of bread and cookies.

Shipping a gift basket is also available as are gift certificates.

For details, call Great Harvest Bakery at 344-4404.

Turnbull will select one in which to package the order.

When Turnbull receives a request from customers to include bread from Great Harvest Bread Co. in the gift basket, she'll go around the corner and get a loaf.

"It is completely taken out of their hands if they don't want to make the trip into the store," she said.

Food baskets or gift sets also make nice host and hostess gifts.

Williams-Sonoma at Twelve Oaks Mall has a variety of foods which make excellent gift items.

The Gingerbread Cookies they have for the holidays are enhanced with Chinese five spice powder.

From Italy, the panettone raisin-studded bread is packed in a decorative tin as is the chocolate covered toffee trio.

"All those items we bring in especially for the holidays," said Allison Hill, who has been the manager of



Sandy Witsie, left, and Tracy Harper, of the Executive Sports memorabilia shop at Twelve Oaks Mall, display 24-karat, gold-covered brass Detroit Red Wings' hockey pucks.

Photo by JOHN HEIDER

Mini-stores open at the mall

By CAROL DIPPLE
Feature Editor

Looking for authentic Australian merchandise? Can't find just the right shade of cosmetics? Or how about a one-of-a-kind sports collectible?

They're all at Twelve Oaks Mall in the common area which is now being utilized for merchandising.

Retail Merchandise Unit or RMU as the new mini-stores are called, differ from a kiosk which resides permanently in a common area. The self-contained RMUs, which will be constantly evolving, come in a variety of styles with a rich wood finish and glass display cases.

"This is the first time there's anything even resembling the old cart program, we don't even attempt to identify with that, we try to keep it much more upscale," said Stuart Silbert, specialty retail agent with Twelve Oaks Mall in Novi.

Each of the 19 RMU's now located on both levels of the mall are niche oriented.

"The only way they are going to

survive is to have a very specific item that is unique in character and unique in every which way," Silbert said.

For example, Healing Expressions, uses technology to measure, analyze and display a customer's biodata. Related items include candles, crystals and visualization kits.

"This is one of its kind in Michigan," Silbert said.

Jacaru Australia, which carries authentic Australian merchandise, has nine units throughout the country. Based out of Illinois, everything is imported from Australia.

RMUs are strategically located in the mall. The Teen Explosion unit is situated on the lower level in the Sears court in front of the Disney store.

"What I wanted to do was complement the inline stores," he said.

A visual merchandiser works with each of the mini-stores to create an interesting display and theme. The Noah's Ark unit,

located on the upper level in the Lord and Taylor court, has created various scenes for the Beanie Babies they sell.

"I never looked at Beanie Babies before but when I started seeing them in a setting like this I realized why people collect them. I always saw them in masses," he said. "Little kids come up here and there are nose prints because they are looking in the cases."

RMUs are secured with a tarp and security wire system at night.

Executive Sports, located on the lower level of the Lord and Taylor court, has collectible memorabilia from trading cards to gold and aluminum pucks, coins, cups, and lithographs in a wide price range which can be custom packaged.

"That's a niche, very, very high-end collectibles," said Silbert. "No trinkets or trash."

Headsoz, head apparel which can be worn five different ways, located on the lower level of the

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