

JULY 2022

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- ▶ Single-Family Permits Lag; Multifamily Surges – 6
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**MICHAEL STOSKOPF RETIREMENT PARTY & HBA-AAM Annual Picnic**



*In support of the Foundation's Walter R. Stoskopf Memorial Skilled Trades Scholarship*

Elliot Eisenberg, Ph.D. was the keynote speaker at the HBA-CAM Mid-Year Economic Forecast Breakfast, followed by the AAM Multifamily Rental Construction Forum. Over 250 members and guests attended. See page 4 for more information and links to the two presentations.

See page 10 for more information on attendance and sponsorship.

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# Impressive Fireplaces – Indoors & Out

WRITTEN BY NANCY ROZUM

Humans have always had a fascination with the paradoxical nature of fire. It has the ability to destroy as well as to sustain life. It also has the ability to calm and to mesmerize. **As homeowners struggle with the challenges of today's fast-paced world having the ability to relax and just sit and gaze at dancing flames can provide a sanctuary and a place to rejuvenate.**

Electric fireplaces are gaining traction with consumers because they are easy to use, energy-efficient and cost effective. “The electric fireplace category continues to grow as the appearance and technology of these fireplaces gets better and better,” said **Pete Anderson with Williams Distributing**. “An electric fireplace gives the end user flexibility on where to place the fireplace in a home.” Electric fireplaces often have separate controls for the flame and for the heat, so they can be used comfortably in the summer. “Linear is our best-selling electric fireplace design,” said Pete. “Electric fireplaces usually have a clear crystal lighted ember bed and offer the user the ability to change the color and brightness of the flames at the touch of a button on a remote control.”

Fireplaces in outdoor settings also continue to gain in popularity. “With the pandemic, homes became a landing pad, rather than a launching pad, and a lot of homeowners started looking to make their homes more resort-like,” said Pete. “In the past years we’ve seen more covered lanais that have included either gas or wood burning fireplaces. Builders and remodelers can install fireplaces in covered outdoor areas but there are some limitations on the type of

products that can be used.”

For indoors, Pete is still seeing quite a few wood burning fireplaces being installed in addition to electric and gas models. “People are installing wood burning fireplaces with gas log inserts to achieve the large, robust open-hearth look. The days of the 42” or 50” wide fireplace are waning in favor of larger 72” or 100” wide fireplaces.” **This size trend is directly linked to the trend for larger, wide-screen televisions which often go over the fireplaces.** “Floating, wall-mount mantels have become popular and are similar in appearance to floating shelving in kitchens,” said Pete. “Inside the fireplace, log sets are the most popular for traditional rectangular fireplaces with linear fireplaces often having stones, logs, driftwood or other decorative elements.” The great room is still the primary place to install a fireplace, but electric units are more frequently being installed in master baths, master suites and finished basements. “Fireplaces are moving away from exterior walls in favor of interior walls,” said Pete. Fireplaces can be a great way to create a room division, especially in an open concept home, without closing off a space entirely.

Contemporary design is strong in the fireplace market, notes **Charlie Tait with FireClass Fireplaces / FiberClass Insulation**. “Since Montigo introduced the first linear fireplace 20 years ago, contemporary design has just been getting more and more popular in the fireplace industry,” said Charlie. “There are so many options to create a stunning contemporary



Outdoor fireplace at The Alston by MJC Companies in White Oaks in Washington Twp.

fireplace.” Montigo’s Delray Linear fireplace model offers the option of a black reflective glass liner which takes the fireplace’s flames and projects them across the back of the unit, filling the firebox with fire. In addition to the standard modern black reflective glass panels, Montigo’s Distinction model also comes in two fluted liner versions – an Ash or a Tuscan finish – and Montigo offers mirror and black porcelain firebox finishes on various models. Combining these firebox liners with firestone, fireglass or firebead media paired with halogen or LED uplighting can provide a modern focal point in any indoor or outdoor space. “There are so many more options on how you can configure the inside of a fireplace, from neat log designs to rock media to metal media,” said Charlie.

The custom fireplace market is also going strong. “The Prodigy Series of luxury residential and light commercial fireplaces is Montigo’s custom line,” said Charlie. “This line offers fireplace sizes up to 5 feet tall and 8 feet wide which can be installed in just about any location. These custom fireplaces are offered in multiple configurations including single side, see through, corner and bay and there is a size and style to fit every project.” Finishing materials can be attached directly to the fireplace and brought down to the edge of the glass creating a stunning focal point without interruption. The



addition of COOL-Pack glass makes Montigo fireplace glass safe to touch. "In addition to cultured stone, we have seen some really stunning and creative finishes around these fireplaces, including marble and granite as well as steel and porcelain panels," said Charlie.

**FireClass Fireplaces is also seeing a strong demand for outdoor fireplaces.**

"Homeowners either want gas or wood burning fireplaces outdoors," said Charlie. "If they want a dedicated outdoor gas fireplace we often recommend the Montigo line because all of their gas fireplaces are rated for both indoor and outdoor use. So many times we find homeowners installing a gas fireplace in an open space and then wanting to enclose the space so they can use it more often in our Michigan climate. If a dedicated gas fireplace is rated only for outdoor use it is very unsafe to use in an enclosed space."

Consumers are getting used to the convenience of controlling their environment from the keypad of their phones or from remote controls. Napoleon has introduced the first gas fireplaces and gas fireplace inserts to be controlled by Bluetooth technology using the eFire Controller app on a mobile device.

"Napolean has always been feature driven and on the forefront of technological advances," said **Mike Segal with Big George's / Witbeck Home Appliance Mart**. "There are customers that are really into technology and are asking for this type of convenience where they can turn the power on and off and control features such as the light and heat through a smartphone." Another product from Napolean that is getting consumers' attention is the Clearion™ Elite Series, which Napolean touts as the first truly see through electric fireplace that is built-in and hardwired. This fireplace can heat separate rooms at different temperatures and can be controlled with two remotes. The privacy mode allows the user to change the transparency of the fireplace when solitude is desired. "Napolean's electric fireplaces are really authentic looking," said Mike. "They produce some heat and are less costly to install than a traditional fireplace. We are finding that a lot of homeowners with traditional fireplaces are installing electric logs sets which give them the efficiency and the look they want. We have a number of models on display in our showrooms."

The challenge of placing a television above



Sheridan by Robertson Homes in Margate, in Plymouth.

a fireplace has been solved by Napolean's Dynamic Heat Control™ System which channels the heat from its Luxuria series fireplaces to other locations in a home. "Napolean's system channels the heat so it exits at the top of the fireplace and above a television," said Mike. "The heat can also be vented into adjacent rooms in the home. This technology also provides flexibility in finishing the area surrounding a fireplace, making it possible to bring otherwise flammable materials, such as wood panels, right to the face of the fireplace." ■



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# Mid-Year Economic Forecast Breakfast and Multifamily Rental Construction Forum

On June 15th, over 250 HBA, AAM and CAM members and guests gathered in the Diamond Center at Suburban Collection Showplace for the 10th annual industry-wide event beginning with a trade show and speaker "Meet & Greet" followed by family-style breakfast. Our keynote speaker, **Elliot Eisenberg, Ph.D. of Graphs and Laughs, LLC**, presented an economic overview and forecast in his trademark energetic and entertaining style, while leaving the audience with a clear understanding of what they need to know for near term business planning. Find Elliot's presentation here: <https://www.builders.org/pdf/Elliot-Eisenberg-Forecast-June-2022.pdf>

Elliot's presentation was followed by the Multifamily Rental Construction Forecast, sponsored by Walker & Dunlop and

moderated by **David Wilkins**, a managing director in Walker & Dunlop's Affordable Production Group. Find the Walker & Dunlop presentation here: <https://www.builders.org/pdf/AAM-Multifamily-Rental-Forum-Walker-and-Dunlop-June-2022.pdf>

Thank you to all who participated in this successful event with table top displays, as sponsors, speakers, panelists and attendees. ■



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# Single-Family Permits Lag In May As Multifamily Surges

MICHAEL C. STOSKOPF

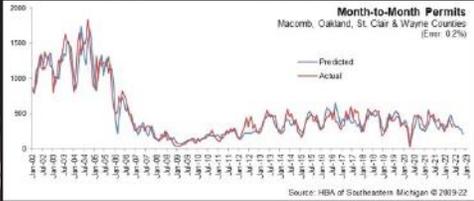
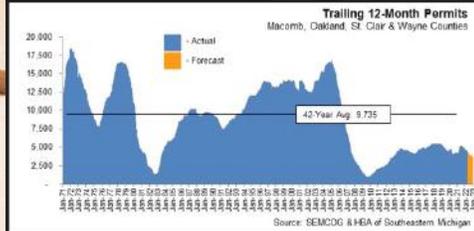
## New Housing Permit Forecast



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Industry Metric	1-Month Ago	1-Year Ago
<b>Employed</b> Bureau of Labor Standards	-1.3%	4.0%
	1,884,365	
<b>Workforce</b> Bureau of Labor Standards	-1.7%	1.6%
	1,968,951	
<b>North American Vehicle Production</b> Wards Automotive	1.5%	22.9%
	1,239,841	
<b>Crude Oil Price Per Barrel</b> NYMEX	-8.1%	64.6%
	\$102.75	
<b>30-Year Fixed Rate Mortgage + Points</b> Freddie Mac	0.35 bp	2.47 bp
	6.13%	
<b>Average New Single Family Permit Value</b> HBA of Southeastern Mich	4.1%	4.0%
	\$308,097	
<b>Average New Single Family Permit Value</b> HBA of Southeastern Mich	2.8%	17.2%
	\$352,575	

Based on residential permit data compiled by HBA and reported in the *HBA/Carter Lumber Southeastern Michigan Residential Building Activity Report™* a total of 308 single-family home (SFH) permits were issued in Macomb, Oakland, St. Clair and Wayne counties in May 2022.



May's total was 13 percent lower than April 2022's revised total of 355 permits and 35 percent lower than the total for May 2021 (473). HBA's econometric model had forecast a total of 389 permits for the month. Meanwhile, average permit values continue to increase, remaining up 17 percent year-over-year (\$352,575).

Multifamily (for rent) construction surged, adding a remarkable 587 permits in May. This brings 2022's year-to-date total to 1,329 which is the highest level to start a year since 1998 (1,926).

The biggest factor contributing to both the SFH slowdown and the multi-family for rent surge continues to be the rise in the baseline 30-year fixed rate mortgage. As reported monthly by Freddie Mac, the 30-year rate, plus points, rose again to 6.13 percent representing an increase of nearly 2.5 basis points over May 2021. This measure is now at its highest point since November 2008 (6.79 percent), during the Great Recession.

The continuing rise in average new permit values and existing SFH prices, combined with higher interest rates, creates affordability issues, thus driving the surge in multi-family for rent construction. Material and labor cost inputs to new construction continue to be up significantly, namely lumber and oil prices, compared to pre-pandemic levels, even while lumber has decreased from its recent peak price.

On a positive note, the number of people employed in the region (+4 percent) and North American Vehicle Production (+23 percent) are both up significantly compared to May 2021. HBA's permit forecast for the next six months shows a continued slowdown. ■



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## RECOGNIZING LAUREN TOLLES



**CRAIN'S** DETROIT BUSINESS 2022  
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KSI Kitchen & Bath owner Lauren Tolles has been honored by *Crain's Detroit Business* in their 2022 *Notable Women in Construction, Design & Architecture* feature. The women on Crain's list have literally shaped our world - designing and building the spaces we live, work, and play in - while mentoring and supporting the next generation of women in the field.

KSI has flourished under the ownership of Lauren and her husband Bryan, adding two design centers in West Michigan in the last two years and sweeping the NAHB kitchen awards at the International Builders Show in 2022. Most recently, Lauren oversaw the design of KSI's new Grand Rapids Design Center showroom established this spring (pictured above).

Lauren has a passion for interior design education and helping foster the development of the next generation of design professionals. She enjoys hosting a class annually for Lawrence Tech's undergraduate architecture students in addition to welcoming interns to her design studio each summer. We're thrilled to see Lauren get recognized for her impact on the construction community!

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# Lone Worker Safety

WRITTEN BY DANIEL ADAY, COMPONE ADMINISTRATORS SAFETY & LOSS PREVENTION SPECIALIST

In almost all fields of work, employees may periodically find themselves working in situations where they are the only employee within the area. This could be anything from a single employee driving from one site to a



specific job location hours away, to an employee staying later than anyone else and having to close up the building at the end of day. **These lone workers typically do not recognize their increased risk when putting themselves in these situations where there may not be any safe contact who can help with emergencies, or prevent and deter unwanted hazards.**

Increased hazards for a lone worker can range from simply not having an additional person who can assist with team-lifting heavier loads to not having someone to respond to a medical emergency such as a heart attack. Specific hazards may be dependent on the location and environment, and may change with time of day or season. Specific hazards, for example, may be significantly warmer climates where an employee

is working outside and starts to exhibit signs of heat stroke, where others may not be present to recognize the early symptoms of this illness. Other specific hazards may be due to heightened crime rates in the area and having an employee be considered an “easy target” to a would-be perpetrator or criminal.

Prevention of lone workers can be rather hard to achieve. Several jobs require employees to be working by themselves either due to low demand or volume of the job, the inability to employ more workers for specific tasks or any of dozens of other reasons. Referencing the hierarchy of safety controls, the most effective means of controlling hazards is to eliminate the hazard, substitute with something safer, engineering controls, administrative controls, and personal protective equipment (PPE), respectively. This means, the most effective ways to control this inherent hazard is to eliminate working alone, substitute lone workers, or put in engineering controls - although none of these are feasible in most instances. This

leaves us with the remaining two controls.

**Administrative controls** are fairly straightforward. This could be as simple as radio, phone or in-person check-ins on a predetermined time frame, such as 15 minute intervals during after-hours work sessions. Or, controlled areas, locked doors, not taking part in more hazardous activities during lone worker time or simply having periodic training of dos and don'ts while working alone. Whenever any means of administrative controls, or really any kind of controls, are used to address lone worker safety or any other hazard, procedures should be developed and taught to all affected employees. Training could consist of ensuring that you are always in contact with a colleague when traveling. Also, to have employees know that they must be more alert and aware of their surroundings and to have some pre-determined protocol of what to do when attempts to reach a lone worker go unanswered.

This brings us to our last control, personal protective equipment. **PPE Controls may include lone worker devices that allow remote monitoring of employees who may be exposed to dangers.** Some of these devices have been around for several years, such as panic buttons under desks that can activate a call to the nearest dispatch to alert them of a security emergency. Newer devices are designed around the ability to be mobile. While there are devices that are specific to the job, inexpensive but effective options may already be at your fingertips. A quick search on your phone's app store will result in dozens of apps that range in price from free, to a small monthly fee. These apps allow someone to safely alert a designee of an emergency, make a call using limited button presses, allow for secure monitoring of workers exposed to environmental hazards or to allow the user to hold down a button until safely in their locked vehicle during late shifts.

While there is little regulation out there to enforce these rules to protect employees, employers have the duty to always protect their workers from any recognized hazard. For more information on Lone Worker Safety, please reach out to Dan at daday@compone.net. ■

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# Advocacy Update

WRITTEN BY HBA AND AAM CEO, FORREST M. WALL, CAE

## CERA Program Closed

The Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) has announced the closing of the COVID Emergency Rental Assistance (CERA) program to new applications effective June 30, 2022. This program, which began accepting applications in March 2021, had received over 266,000 applications for assistance as of June 15. Over \$1 Billion in federal rental and utility assistance funding has been appropriated to the program, and MSHDA will continue to process applications submitted prior to June 30.

With the announcement of the program closure, AAM sent a letter to the Michigan Supreme Court requesting the rescission of Administrative Order 2020-17. This

administrative order was implemented initially in conjunction with a state of emergency caused by COVID-19 and the statewide (followed by nationwide) eviction moratorium. It was further extended to facilitate the renter assistance funding from the federal government. The order provides for several requirements – including a two-hearing process – which alter and go beyond Michigan’s summary proceedings statute.

## Regulations Now Account For Over 40 Percent Of Apartment Development Costs

Recently released research from the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) and the National Multifamily Housing Council (NMHC) shows regulations now account for an average of 40.6% of apartment development costs.

The figure includes regulation imposed by all levels of government, and was based on a survey of 49 developers across the United States. A variety of regulations were cited, including zoning requirements, building codes, permitting, and safety rules to name a few. NAHB Chairman Jerry Konter said “This study clearly shows how burdensome regulations are exacerbating the nation’s housing affordability crisis and that officials at all levels of government need to make it a priority to reduce excessive regulatory costs to allow developers and builders to boost housing production and ease affordability challenges.” The full study is available at [www.nahb.org](http://www.nahb.org). ■



## THANK YOU

David Wilkins

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## AAM Multifamily Rental Construction Forum

### PANEL OF EXPERTS

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- JON DURHAM – NOMI Developers
- JASON FRACASSA - DevMar
- DAVID VIVIO – O’Brien Construction Co.
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