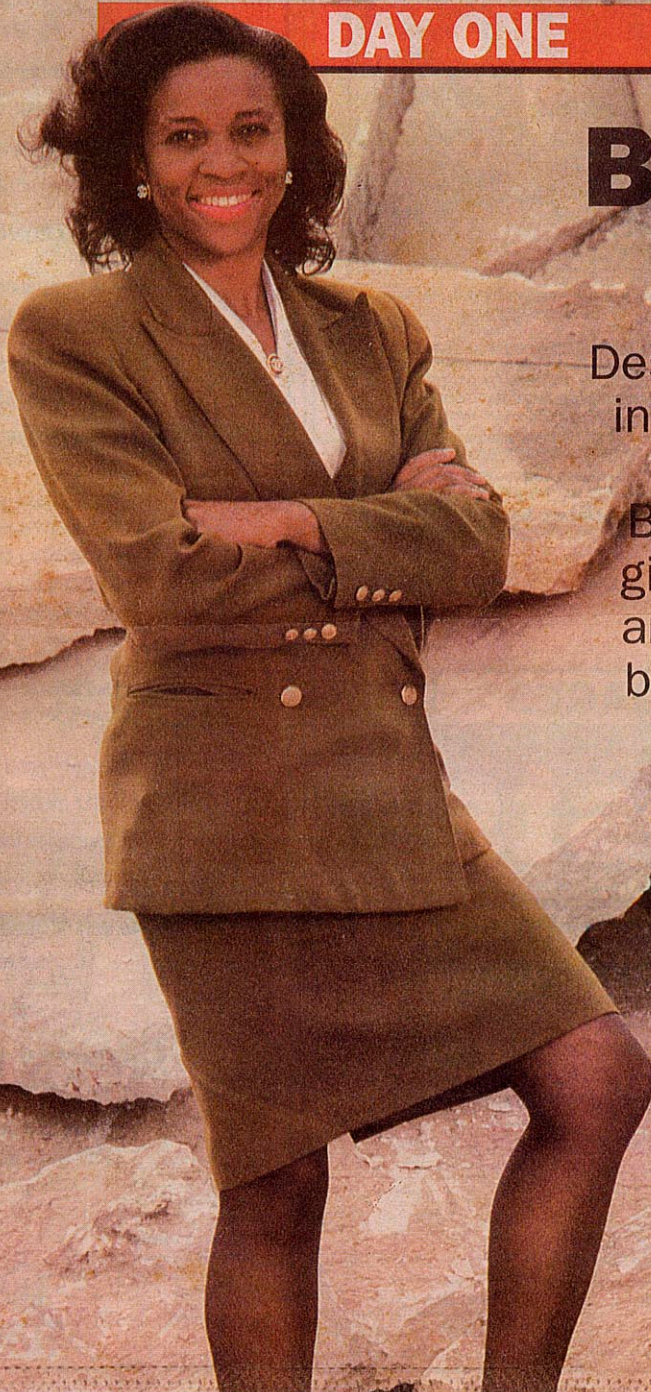


BUSINESS

DAY ONE



BUILDING HOPE

Despite some cracks in its foundation, a new West Palm Beach program is giving Ann McNeill and other minority builders their first big break

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Air fares climb to new heights - of confusion

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JEFF GREENE/Staff Photographer

Under a new city ordinance, the subcontract for fencing-in the site for the new police building nearly equals all money spent with black-owned firms in seven years.



LANNIS WATERS/Staff Photographer

Contractor Ann McNeill of West Palm Beach got her start fixing up old houses. Now, as the partner on an \$18 million city project, she's giving other minorities and women a chance at work.

Setting aside success: Builder Ann McNeill

By KENNETH BOHANNON
Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

As far as Ann McNeill of West Palm Beach is concerned, her success ends the debate about whether or not minority set-aside programs work.

McNeill used minority set-asides in Dade County to build a successful construction company in Miami, and she is the first to capture a prize contract — albeit a controversial one — with the city of West Palm Beach as it attempts to award more contracts to firms owned by women and minorities.

McNeill's Miami-based MCO Construction firm is the joint partner with Federal Construction in the largest bid ever awarded to a minority-owned firm by the city of West Palm Beach — the \$18.7 million police administration building, set to be completed next summer.

Now she's using that contract and the city's set-asides rule to help other minority companies in the area get the kind of work that can keep them in business.

McNeill, 37, was awarded the contract because city commissioners said hers was the only one that met the 15-

Please see McNEILL/next page