

DESIGN FOR SUCCESS

"Green" and Growing Making a Difference on Our Environment

AS WE TRAVEL into the 21st century, many people are seeking information regarding mankind and the environment. More people are inquiring about how to design a home that takes into effect the environment. Some basic questions include how to build it, inhabit it, and eventually dispose of a home and preserve the environment.

The terms "environmental" and "green" are household words for everything from cleaning detergents to roofing materials. Consumers are standing up to the need to help "save the en-

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vironment", at their own risk. New products aimed at earth-friendly consumers are showing up daily in stores, showrooms and building centers. Consumers are gathering literature to help make informed decisions. Market competition is growing, prices are being lowered and the selection for earth-friendly products is improving. The environmental and "green" movements have reared their heads. They are growing at a very strong pace. The "green" building era is here.

WHAT IS IT?

What is all the fuss about? "Green" building and design is



more than a trend. It is a conscious decision to improve the environment, economy, public health and comfort while addressing common issues in the eye of the consumer. Issues we strongly consider when making purchases such as quality, durability and longevity are still the same issues with the exception of focus on the environment. This style of building is about environmental consciousness, energy saving design, the use of nontoxic materials, and the use of efficient techniques to construct a more cost-effective house.

Consumers that have researched "green" building and earth-friendly products are aware of four principal areas preserving environmental health while strengthening the local economy and promoting a high quality of life:

1. Water – collection, use and reuse
2. Energy – source, use and reuse
3. Materials – source, content, composition and the manufacturing processes used to create them
4. Waste – disposal, recyclables and resource efficiency

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Austin, Texas witnessed first hand the stronghold of a community pulling together to address this type of building and the conservation of energy. The area has an official "Green Building Program," the first of its kind in the country. Run by the city, it is an environmentally friendly program for building homes and residences. Homeowners bask in the excitement that their home is environmentally appropriate, perhaps with a metal roof from recycled materials and the collection of rainwater from the roof can be utilized for drinking and laundry. With the

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influx of "green" building, consumers will see more obvious practices in the community and into the home. The transformation of traditional building practices, technologies, and materials will become the focus of building throughout the 21st century.

Education is the key to helping homeowners understand and make wise decisions about how "green" they want their homes to be. "The most important step is to provide homeowners with an abundance of information and options," according to David Johnston, author of *Green Remodeling: Changing the World One Room at a Time*. "Pick and choose among the options for the design features and "green" building products that serve the homeowners' best interests."

THE FUTURE

Consumers that have taken the steps to live in or transform their way of living to "green" building and design will be driven by flexibility, efficiency, ecology and cost as well as comfort and functionality. As we move more into the 21st century, homes will be smaller and more efficient. There will be flexible design plans to accommodate multiple uses within the same space. This will allow for family growth and necessities such as multiple home office environments where laptops and Internet access become a necessity as opposed to a novelty. Interior surfaces will take on a new look with new emphasis on natural materials from sustainable resources that are easy to maintain,



affordable, and recyclable. Improved heating and cooling systems and energy-saving appliances will reduce energy consumption by as much as two-thirds.

Daylight will become more important with the use of products like "smart windows" that will turn from clear to opaque for light control and privacy. Windows will begin to generate electricity with the use of technology. Computer automation and remote controls will open, and close curtains, screens and shades for efficiency and comfort. Wall switches will continue to be used with little to no touching to control lighting with the activation of voice commands, remote controls or automatically through sensors. Eventually, technology will automatically

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adjust lighting in rooms as people enter and exit. Consumers will see an increase in lighting options to include energy efficient indoor lighting to solar powered outdoor lighting. Light bulbs will transform to become more environmentally friendly, requiring less mercury and other toxic materials.

Kitchens will contain more safety features, be more comfortable and flexible while serving multiple purposes for growing families. Workspaces will become more specialized to accommodate morning coffee preparation, snack area for children, second microwave, and dinner prep area. Appliances will be more energy-efficient, voice activated, adjustable to fit different size users, easier to use, quieter, and faster. Computers will be used to hold all recipes, entertain with music and TV, organize personal messages, finances, and "things-to-do".

Bathrooms may look the same, but will be more luxurious, interactive, and practical with spa-like features and functionality. Comfort and safety features will be carefully considered and designed in the bathrooms to include grab bars, non-slip flooring, adjustable lavatories and sinks to flow with new high-tech conveniences. Consumers will see this in standard bath fixtures and bathroom accessories as ergonomic pieces of functional art. Sensors will operate ventilation, faucets, and lighting as when entering the room. Water will be recycled within homes via an organic local treatment plant to produce clean water to be reused as irrigation, laundry, etc.

Green building/design throughout the 21st century will take on a new meaning with the advancement of technologies. Scientists, architects and engineers will continue to develop state-of-the-art products to make life easy, comfortable and flexible. This will preserve the environment and natural resources, while improving the health, safety, and general quality of life within the home. |

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