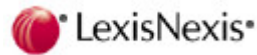


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## Green, 'gadgets' and rushed; Trend-spotter predicts an eco-friendly 2008 for busy people

*Bill Cunniff, The Chicago Sun-Times*

Trend-spotter Ann Mack expects to see construction, design and decorating accommodate eco-friendly, digitally savvy and time-crunched homeowners in 2008.

"Most homes are a reflection of their owners -- and we believe they're also a reflection of broad societal trends," said Mack of JWT, a giant advertising firm.

Here are Mack's predictions about the top home trends for 2008:

### 'PRIUS' HOMES

As energy prices remain high, homeowners will adjust by adopting green principles to save money. And creating a green home will help to enhance its value.

For example, Perry Bigelow of Bigelow Homes has been involved in green home building for quite a while. "We were doing it because it was the right thing to do way before there was a green building movement," he said. "We were doing it when other builders were saying, 'Perry, you're nuts. Are you insane? Why don't you do something where you can make more money?'"

"We wanted to do low-impact development, but when we started HomeTown Aurora, the engineering profession wasn't ready for it yet. City engineers said: 'Not on my watch will you do that stuff.'"

"It wasn't because it was bad engineering. It was just because it was not accepted practice at that time," he said. "We were unable to do green development with respect to the community environment, but we were able to build green houses that carried the energy guarantee." If heating bills exceed \$400 a year in any of the first three years, Bigelow Homes will pay the difference, the guarantee says.

HomeTown Aurora won a Community Vision Award from the Metropolitan Planning Council a few years ago.

Adopting green-building practices requires innovation. "Thirty years ago, we developed a device that our excavator put on his front-end loader that we could use to slide under forest floor -- including small trees -- pick up 50 square feet of floor at a time, and move it to another location," said Bigelow, who is an engineer. "If we had to put a driveway through the woods, for example, we would move the forest floor and trees to an area that was open. Even if we had to disturb nature, we still wanted to preserve it."

Sometimes, green development is a walk in the park.

"Most of the people who work in the Town Center [HomeTown's central area] are like me -- they live in the community and they walk to work," he said. "There are six other people in our office that live in the community and walk to work. That's the ultimate in green development -- where you have a compact development and people can walk to work, walk to play, and walk to school."

"The second biggest traffic consideration on highways, other than getting to work, is getting to

school. Most of our kids walk to school. All of those are things that we planned into the development," he said.

Mack, the trend-spotter, pointed out that some major banks (including JPMorgan Chase and Citigroup) are offering "energy-efficient" mortgages for homeowners doing green renovations.

#### BACKYARDS WITH BLING

Homeowners are taking their passion for interior decorating outside, turning their backyards into exotic environments, Mack observed. Watch for eager renovators to rethink these spaces big-time.

Outdoor kitchens will rival their indoor counterparts, gardens will grow into jungles and basic pools will morph into tropical oases, she said. More people will enjoy home-grown produce too.

#### SPACE AGE

As gadgets and gizmos are everywhere in homes, look for more furniture that takes all this technology into account. In nightstands to coffee tables, new designs include innovations (such as communications strategist) with dedicated storage to hide cables and power strips.

#### DE-LOVELY TO DECLUTTER

With time at an ever-greater premium for many people, more consumers will look to professionals to organize their homes. Companies such as the Container Store and online services provide decluttering experts who can readily reorder a chaotic environment according to a customer's needs.

#### BOOMERS GETTING OLDER

As baby boomers get a little older, more people will start modifying their homes to accommodate their needs. Some renovations will be simple, such as installing easier-to-use doorknobs with levered handles instead of round doorknobs. Others will be more complex, such as installing stair-lifts.

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