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Green Building Comes Down to Earth

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Green building is slowly making inroads into residential construction. As it does, there may be a trend to keep the carbon-cutting goodies in the background.

Nick DiCosola, a Chicago homebuilder, and owner of Distinguished Dwellings, encourages buyers to build 'functional' green, rather than 'aesthetic' green. To him, aesthetic earthiness includes features like bamboo flooring and recycled countertops, which improve the look of a home, but don't do much for a household's energy consumption. In contrast, 'functional' green consists of small, low-cost improvements to a home that save energy, money, and the environment.

"Many of my clients want a traditional look and/or they want the money they invest in building green to reduce their energy consumption and benefit the environment for years to come, he says, "That won't necessarily happen with 'green' countertops."

The solutions he proposes blend into the background and include basics like ultra-efficient water heaters and furnaces, insulating windows, and Energy Star appliances. He argues that it can be a long time coming before a client realizes a solid return on investment with some of the fancier improvements on the market.

DiCosola has a point. It probably makes sense for a homeowner on a budget to invest in lower cost improvements that will have bigger, quicker impact on the planet.

Taking a different perspective in an interview in the Arizona Republic, luxury homebuilder Camille Gietz of Gietz Master Builders expressed this sentiment about eco-construction: "It's got to look

good."

These seem like two different motivations. The former is an attempt to do good without breaking the bank. The latter seems like an image concern -- a willingness to reduce one's carbon footprint as long as that can be done while wearing designer shoes.

Still, both roads point in the same direction. So it makes me wonder whether, as green building goes mainstream, we're going to see more homeowners saying 'hold the solar panels.'

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Posted By Scott Salyer at 09:43 PM

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Great story as we all aim to use renewable sources. We use green whenever possible

Posted By Ttishi on June 19, 2008 at 11:13 AM

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