

GREEN TECH THE SERIES COLUMN FOR JULY 2, 2015  
HEADLINE: SOME "FUN" TECHNOLOGY FOR YOUR HOME

Like most involved in the sustainable building industry, in our attempt to assemble the perfectly balanced home, we get wrapped up in the building envelope, giving considerations to energy and air quality at the same time. I get a steady stream of innovative product information sent to me and I thought it would be interesting to share some of these.

A home today is becoming your "space" to relieve you from the every present stress of the modern world. Custom builders are offering more and more home cinema rooms, bathrooms that double as a spa and internal systems that are controlled by your I-Phone, no matter where you are in the world. The I-Pod era is certainly upon us and installing integrated docking stations is becoming popular. Wireless systems in homes are one of the fastest growing aspects, connecting your computer to your TV to control connected features like security, monitoring the children as well as interior climate control, for example. Wireless home control tablets are quickly rising in popularity.

Home entertainment is by far the fastest rising new technology. Microsoft is developing a system called "Room Alive," using a series of cameras and Kinect Camera sensors to map out a room and the people in it. This system then projects an augmented reality onto every surface in the room, giving a hologram image, the feeling of being inside that image. One idea that I'm of the opinion is going a bit far, but others will disagree, uses advanced beam mirror technology. TV mirrors are free from image distortion and once turned off, the TV instantly becomes a decorative mirror, hiding the TV.

Touch free technology first came out in taps used in commercial and institutional bathrooms. Today it has exploded to every fixture in a bathroom. Touch free popularity is driven by efforts to reduce bacterial contamination, along with the ability to more fully control the flow and temperature of taps. Touch free taps are slowly becoming affordable, LED touch screens are being integrated into controlling the entire bathroom environment, changing the floor temperature, kind and level of music, lighting and some smart toilets and bidets where you can raise and lower the lid, change the water temperature, all with touch of a remote screen. I received one info package on a company that is integrating LED lights into shower heads and the side walls of the moulded shower enclosure, coupled with a touch screen that you can use to change color and brightness in the

shower. This is not limited to showers, however; towel bars, tissue holders and even the door handle can now be illuminated.

Kitchens are usually the first to see new technology and one would think there is not much left to do; not so. Touch activated or touch screen advancements are here. Cabinet doors have long had pressure catches available, now they are electronic and require very little touch to open and they open as you set them. One area where lighting was rarely used was inside cabinets. However, with the advent of small, but bright, LED lighting programmed to an open door, lighting inside of cabinets is one of the fastest growing options. Along with doors, built in recycling bins are very common now. The next step of hand motion activated internal tracks that slide these bins out are here. Even the simple floor trash can is now available with sensor activated lids so that you don't touch the can. I have heard that a couple of appliance companies are working on making stoves completely sensor activated, allowing your recipe to show on a virtual screen behind the stove, along with the usual computer activities like e-mail.

Sleep deprivation is one of the most talked about subjects today; we simply don't get enough sleep. I see a number of ideas in this area and have picked three that are really advanced in my opinion. The "sound sleep pillow" allows you to listen to music without disturbing your partner's sleep. Buried within the pillow is a speaker system that is connected to your MP3 or TV. This allows you to lull away to sleep listening to high quality sound. Heating pads and electric blankets have been around for years. Now there is one that actually heats or cools either side of the bed, allowing for individual settings. For the real hi tech bedroom experience, there is now a bed which offers a surround shade option, full sound system, ceiling mirror TV coupled to your TV or computer and operated by an LED remote control.

Outside your home, while motion lighting has been around for years, now you can add cameras with voice activated commands. Imagine seeing an intruder and being able to take their picture from various angles and then verbally warn them that you can see them. Now available at a reasonable price and all controlled by your tablet or I-phone.

While some of this technology may seem hard to believe and even harder to believe they will ever become mainstream, in fact many will. Touch free taps are very popular now and the side benefit is that they reduce water consumption. Computer controlled HVAC systems do a better job of monitoring energy costs. The era of touch and motion activated home conveniences is here. How we make it work for us in a sustainable living home is the next step.

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