

## Socially Responsible Design

Socially responsible design, whether focused on the individual or wider society, moves beyond economic and consumerist considerations to embrace ethical, emotional and humanitarian values. For the designer, it can mean developing products made from sustainable materials, like bamboo, post-consumer recycled paper or reclaimed wood. It can mean designing products that encourage lower consumption of resources like water and electricity.



**Kona Africabike** [www.konabiketown.com](http://www.konabiketown.com)  
(British Columbia, USA, Europe)

The BikeTown Africa program distributes simple, well-designed bikes suitable for the local terrain to different parts of Africa to help local healthcare workers supply treatment to HIV/AIDS patients. Kona designs those bikes. The bikes change lives - the introduction of the AfricaBikes into these rural communities has assisted healthcare workers in reaching up to eight times as many patients in a single day compared to when they were without bikes.

The bikes are also available to North American and European consumers. For every two bikes purchased, Kona donates one to BikeTown or other non-profit and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) whose missions include helping to improve the quality of life in sub-Saharan Africa.

It can also mean creating products for use in the developing world which contribute to improved quality of life and are locally appropriate. For example, sending bicycles to remote areas in Africa is only helpful if the bikes can be repaired easily by the users, with locally available parts.

The consumer participates in the process by making informed decisions: choosing sustainably and ethically made products, considering carbon footprint associated with the product (buying locally, regionally or nationally made products means that they are not shipped great distances), and asking retailers for products that meet these criteria. Reducing consumption of power and resources also makes a difference.

**CANUHOME** [www.canuhome.com](http://www.canuhome.com)  
Institute without Boundaries (IwB), George Brown College (Ontario)

The Canuhome is a model for a sustainable, 850 square foot house, developed by students and faculty at IwB. Intended as a starter or retirement home for young couples, singles, seniors or small families, it contains a kitchen, living room, dining room, bathroom and bedroom. It is appropriate for the city, suburbs or countryside and will even fit in backyards and on rooftops.

The home is assembled from prefabricated, portable and adaptable building components that allow for simpler construction and personalization. The design reduces the ecological footprint through energy, water and resource efficiency. The curved roof and double-walled construction allow for more effective passive solar heating, insulation and air circulation which reduces energy bills and improved indoor air quality.

IwB, in partnership with the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, has developed a full-sized model of the Canuhome, which is now traveling across Canada.



This exhibition brings together innovative Canadian examples of socially responsible design, by both student and professional designers.

Interested in learning more about socially responsible design and sustainable living?

There are lots of resources on line and in print. Here are some good examples:

- David R. Berman *Do Good Design: How Designers Can Change the World* (2009)
- William McDonough and Michael Braungart *Cradle to Cradle: Remaking the Way We Make Things* (2002)
- Cynthia E. Smith *Design for the Other 90%* (2007)
- David Suzuki and David R. Boyd *Suzuki's Green Guide* (2008)
- Adria Vasil *Ecoholic* (2007)

Organized by

- Lee Petrie, Curator, Greater Toronto Airports Authority
- Dianne Croteau, Christopher Ferguson et David Green, Canadian Council for Socially Responsible Design