

Former Architect To The Stars Now Touts Green-Building Future

By Deborah Gage. The Wall Street Journal. March 15, 2011.

Poorly designed buildings account for nearly 70% of our energy use, according to John Picard, a sustainability consultant who spoke at the [Cleantech Forum](#) in San Francisco today, and the green building standards we already have don't go far enough.

Picard helped set those standards. Although he was once an architect who designed energy-hogging homes for Hollywood stars, he was put off by the homes' wastefulness and designed his own Southern California home off the grid, with recycled materials.

That effort led to a position helping President Bill Clinton green the White House – the U.S. Green Building Council and its LEED standard arose from the White House project – and his current career as an advisor to venture capital firms and Fortune 500 CEOs.

At one of his latest projects – a Walgreens store in Palo Alto, Calif. – he plans to get rid of the store's fluorescent lights in favor of more natural-looking LED track lights, skylights and [Soladigm Inc.](#)'s "dynamic" glass, which controls the amount of heat and light that can enter a building by changing its tint.

"I watched people shop, and they couldn't tell the color of the makeup because of the lighting, so they'd have to walk outside to take a look," he said. "I told the president of Walgreens that, and he gave me permission to turn the store into a lab."

Picard became emotional several times during his 30-minute talk, which featured a sepia-toned video of man's oneness with nature – he had so much to say about the importance of cleantech, he said, that he found himself at a loss of words.

But when he did speak, he predicted "a day where we have a completely socialized energy network, where everything a building does is rendered and operable to you."

He also predicted that 70% of us will live in megacities where we will be forced to retrofit the buildings we have because massive new construction will be forbidden.

Picard has played a role in connecting venture-backed cleantech companies with large corporations – recently he has worked with Westly Group to persuade Deutsche Bank AG to try out clean technology from the Westly Group’s portfolio companies. (These include Soladigm Inc.).

For some cleantech start-ups, getting a Deutsche Bank or an SAP AG to try out and talk about their technology is a path to funding. Read the VentureWire story [here](#) on the effort by corporations to take a closer look at cleantech start-up technology.

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