

## Updates

### TRENDS

## Firm Predicts Top Development Trends

**G**IFFELS-WEBSTER ENGINEERS, a civil engineering firm based in Michigan, recently revealed what it considers to be the Top Five Real Estate and Development Trends today. According to the firm, these areas will see the most growth moving forward:

- Green building and design
- Assisted living centers
- Hospital expansions and education campus additions
- Mixed-use developments
- Urban revitalization and streetscape improvements

“Although real estate as a whole continues to struggle, developers, civil engineers and architects can remain healthy by working

diligently and creatively to stay on top of new market drivers,” which go beyond single-family homes in the suburbs, said Keith Mayer, president and CEO of Giffels-Webster Engineers. In particular, the firm said these events are happening:

**GREEN BUILDING AND DESIGN.** Increased pressure on communities and businesses to promote more environmentally sound designs has led developers to incorporate more green elements into their projects. A plan to develop a parcel of land for retail might include green roofs, rain gardens, or gutter water retention and irrigation systems. Certified environmental experts soon will become “must-have” team members.

**ASSISTED LIVING CENTERS.** Assisted living developments are on the rise due to higher life expectancies and the influx of aging baby boomers. To help seniors lead independent lives in non-institutionalized environments, these projects are designed to incorporate nature trails, community dining areas, exercise facilities, music rooms, libraries, salons, and billiard game rooms. Opportunities exist to work with both private developers and public government-funded projects.

**HOSPITAL EXPANSIONS AND EDUCATION CAMPUS ADDITIONS.** The hospital and education expansion trend is fueled by institutional projects funded through corporate gifts and endowments. These “recession-proof” resources mean these projects go on even during economic downturns. While single-family home building has slowed, this market segment moves forward with plentiful building and capital improvement.

**MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENTS.** Mixed-use developments are popular today because they reduce risk for the developer during an uncertain economy. Retail and residential can adjoin each other, and it’s common to see large, national retailers combined with smaller, boutique-type stores, as well as housing varying by size, budget and amenities. With this approach, the developer’s investment is spread across the spectrum so that it remains viable even if one segment does not perform as expected.

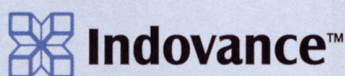
**URBAN REVITALIZATION.** In an effort to attract and keep people in their communities, municipalities and townships are working to make downtowns, retail hubs and central business districts more inviting and accessible to pedestrians. Streetscape improvements, including attractive landscaping, decorative streetlights, brick sidewalk pavers, and strategically planned parking areas, are examples.

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