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Trillion Dollar Women: Use Your Power to Make Buying & Remodeling Decisions

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Women make 91% of home-buying decisions, holding the purse strings on about $2 trillion-worth of buying power annually, according to a Harvard study quoted here. Although they initiate 80% all remodeling projects, preconceptions die hard, and the old myth that construction is a guy thing is still alive and kicking.

Not true, the author contends. “Although Legos and Erector sets might not be as popular as Barbie and Bratz dolls among little girls,” she writes, “as a species, women are highly inclined toward creation and transformation.” Nelson, a real estate investor and broker and an attorney with a master’s degree in psychology, has another reason for targeting women in this book: a belief that men and women approach the home very differently. “Women don’t think about a home in isolation from the rest of their life,” she says. “Rather, women tend to take a very holistic view, considering how each and every feature or amenity or downside of a home will impact every other area of their lives.”

This extremely detailed guide to buying and remodeling an existing home or building a new one is faithful to that premise. Before designing or redoing a kitchen, for example, Nelson counsels the reader to consider her personality type and what that says about her wants and needs. A utilitarian might opt for an enclosed space with plenty of shelving; a frequent entertainer will want a restaurant-grade stove, a large capacity fridge for caterers, and so on. And is the primary cook in the household right- or left-handed?

For any woman who worries that she is not organized enough to oversee a major construction project, this book is both reassuring and a remedy. Exhaustive checklists and questionnaires abound. Also included are tips for dealing with contractors, who will almost certainly be men and, even if they don’t consider females easy marks for a variety of scams, are unlikely to expect them to know a baluster from a barge board. A timely chapter is devoted to building a green home, from choosing the contractor to incorporating elements of green design.

The author reminds buyers that there are degrees of green certification, and includes a list of green remodeling options for conventionally built properties. For condo conversions, Nelson advises would-be buyers to schedule a thorough walk-through with a professional home inspector before loosening those purse strings.
MARILYN BOWDEN (December 11, 2007)

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