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ON THE ROAD AGAIN

Ford studying today's trends to design tomorrow's cars



BY RICH POLLACK

Somewhere tucked away in a Dearborn, Mich. office building, researchers are looking down the road – figuratively – to see what we'll be driving down the road – literally – in 2050.

They know, for instance, that the world's population will be greater and that this probably translates into greater global demand for vehicles. And they also know that all of us will be living longer.

"The question for us is how do we enable mobility for these people," says Sheryl Connelly, Ford Motor Company's manager of Global Trends and Futuring.

Visiting South Florida recently, Connelly took a few minutes to talk a little about

the trends we'll be seeing not just in the distant future, but in the near future as well.

And if there is one message that came across loud and clear, it is that small is big.

"People are trying to figure out how they can downsize in the most positive sense of the word," Connelly says.

These days, she says, conspicuous displays of wealth are out and instead, consumers across the board – not just car buyers – are heading in the direction of "discreet chic."

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