Green Home Buyers Need Facts

by Chris Hall

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Bridgehampton - Green. The word makes me skeptical. Most perspective home buyers want to know about energy efficiencies, they want to know about solar; they want to know about their carbon footprint, they want to know their return on investment for specific purchases they may make to enhance the property. In short, they want facts not hyperbole.

When I think of green, I think of the 1960s. The first Earth Day was April 22, 1970. In some ways 1970 was a continuation of the 1960s and in other ways it may have been a turning point toward the harsh realities of the environmental headlines we read every day. Our family tells stories of my cousin Nancy. She tragically passed away over 30 years ago. She was a child of the 1960s and was a woman of the 1970s. She joined the Peace Corps, she drove a Volkswagen Beetle, married a guy with long hair who played a guitar, and she was always very concerned about the environment. If she were alive today and someone talked about being green; she would be interested in the details. And those details can be tedious.

With skeptics and former (and current) hippies in mind, I'd like to delve into some of the boring facts that make your swimming pool a smart pool. I'm proud of the work that the swimming pool industry has done to make the world a better place. I'm also practical enough to know that it was done for profit. Home owners, builders and architects can greatly benefit from becoming familiar with these advances.

The swimming pool is perhaps the easiest place to create energy efficiency without sacrificing quality. In fact, the newest energy savings products provide a better pool in every way; filtering out the smallest particles, heating with less energy and purifying the water in your pool without the use of salt or chlorine.

When learning about an energy efficient "green" pool, it's easy to be confused or even fooled. For decades, swimming pools were sanitized using chlorine. More recently salt has been used. In fact, it became a buzz word for many who thought that salt was actually doing the sanitizing of the pool water. What many may not realize is that salt simply creates chlorine. The ECO Smarte system, now available through select swimming pool professionals, is a significant advancement in water purification. Through ionization, the ECO Smarte system oxidizes your pool water and makes it drinkable. "Swim in bottled water" is the text that appears throughout their website. Science and technology have caught up with environmental concerns.

Another significant advancement in water filtration is the use of glass media to create superior water clarity and quality. Sand filters are not up to the task of eliminating the small particles that contribute to cloudiness and poor water quality. Glass media and the ECO Smarte system are the perfect marriage.

Hydraulic design and proper engineering have the strongest impact on energy efficiency. There is a direct correlation between the expense of heating and circulating and the design of the swimming pool. When discussing these factors with your swimming pool professional, ask specific questions. The answers should be easy to understand, straight forward and sensible. The slower the flow of water, the less energy will be consumed by heating that water. A detailed description of the various ways to heat a pool requires cost analysis. The choice of heaters also correlates with your needs. Propane, heat pumps and heat exchangers are three of the most common options. The benefits and drawbacks of solar should also be discussed. Choosing the method of heating is one of the many ways that makes every pool a custom pool.

The single greatest loss of heat in a pool is through evaporation. The most cost effective remedy is the automatic retractable safety cover. With the retractable safety cover you can eliminate over 90 percent of evaporation. These covers provide safety and peace of mind as it saves you up to 85 percent of your heating costs. Detailed analysis and a cost analysis should be provided by your pool builder.

There are many other ways to build an energy efficient pool. Variable speed pumps, quality construction, thoughtful design, consideration of the location of the pool and the desires of the home owner are also crucial factors.

The environmentally friendly pool should also be a practical pool. Maybe there are lessons to be learned from the 1960s. P.J O'Rourke said "I like to think of my behavior in the 1960s as a learning experience. Then again, I like to think of anything stupid I've done as a learning experience. It makes me feel less stupid." P.J. might agree not all of it was stupid. Maybe Bob Dylan has it right. "People today are still living off the table scraps of the 1960s. They are still being passed around - the music and the ideas."

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