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According to you, what is a “green” bathroom?

Before talking about the “green” bathroom, we need to know some basics of a “green” project. That is a project which not only has the eco friendly materials or has the trees and waters in it but also depends on the other factors such as location. In other words, we need to identify where the project is located and its surrounding environment. Next, we need to examine how the project affects the people living in it, how it influences on the community, and broader, how it affects on the nation and the Earth.

With bathroom, if applying the LEED standards (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) of USA, we can choose some requirements that the “green” bathroom must meet. These are: Water Efficiency, Energy and Atmosphere, Materials and Resources, Indoor Environment Quality and Regional Material.

Can you explain more about these requirements?

Conserving water does not mean not to use water but it is about using the new devices to control the flow of water. In Vietnam, there are low-flow faucets which save water by reducing the water’s flow but still maintain sufficient quantity for usage. If need more specifying, we can consider the US standards: a water efficient toilet uses 1.3 gallon (4,92litre) per flush.

To save electricity, we need to set priority for using the LED lights, energy efficient lights and occupancy - sensor lights which automatically turn on/off the lights anytime there is a person in room. We also need to consider if it is necessary to have an air conditioner in the bathroom; if yes, air conditioner must not have refrigerants such as such as CFC or HCFC which can cause ozone depletion.

The eco friendly materials currently have the higher price comparing to the other regular materials; so to make them widely used, we need to lighten users with environmental awareness. They can be the materials which are recyclable, reusable or which rapidly renewable such as bamboo or pine. It is better to use the materials which are already available in the region; that is not only economic but it can prevent of wasting energy and air pollution during the transportation of materials. Besides, for a better environment, we need to make use of the natural lights in order to not use electricity during daytime and use minimum VOC (volatile

organic compounds – benzene, methylene, formaldehyde, etc). The VOC exists in most of the Vietnamese houses as in paint, carpet, plastic and others which can lead to allergy or cancer for the users.

Nowadays, some countries in the world already set the standards for “zero VOC” for the household products which forces the production of the materials that does not contain the VOCs. These must be considered especially for the bathroom because it is the place for relaxation; uncovered body will contact with bathroom materials and chemicals that contain in cosmetics. Thus, the natural herbal products which do not contain the harmful chemicals become the valuable choices. The need to eliminate harmful chemical makes natural ventilation important in bathroom in order to ventilate harmful chemicals and moisture that cause mold.

Are “green” standards put into practice in Vietnam?

In Vietnam, recently, the “green” standards have been already applied in some projects. Beside using the “LEED” standards of USA, Vietnam has set its own “green” standards which is LOTUS of VGBC (Vietnam Green Building Council), in which the DWP Company is a member who helps to build up the standards. We have gathered a lot of constructive materials, examine a lot of “green” technology and we can see the positive sight that many brands and products have met these architectural standards.

What are the roles of designing and design’s style in the “green” tendency?

Designing needs flexibility and it must base on the careful considerations to meet all the standards. The designers must manage to understand all environmental regulations and apply to the project flexibly. Moreover, they also need to be eco-friendly themselves.

Honestly, the LEED standards can be applied in all the styles in design. For example, an remolded antique style bathroom can also be “green” if reusing bricks from demolition.

In my opinion, the rule of thumb for designing a green building is simplicity, the simpler the better, because a complicated-shape building which divided into small complex and curvy room would require a lot of material cutting and wasting. This cost more money and materials which require a lot of resources compared to a simple rectangular room which designed to fit materials without cutting and wasting. For a long time, it is said that “Simplicity is beauty” and now I would say “Simplicity is also sustainability”