

# Five Simple Ways to Stay in the Green

by Vincent Battaglia, MBA

*"Scientists have given us a very, very small window of opportunity here. We have essentially ten years to begin to get this situation under control. Otherwise we'll hit tipping points beyond which there will be very little anyone can do to influence things. So there's a new sense of urgency."*

*Ed Mazria*

*Author "Architecture 2030"*

*January 29, 2007 Interview,*

*Bldg Blog*

Everyone is talking about "going green", but what are some easy things you can do to get started? As a founding member of the US Green Building Council's Inland Empire Chapter and General Contractor my perspective on sustainable living is clearly rooted in adapting the way that we treat our environment starting with how we build and maintain our dwelling spaces.

Most of us are beginning to realize that a change in our current use of resources is a must to slow the trend of waste and its negative impact on the environment. Where and how to start can be confusing and may lead to unnecessary expenses, so I'd like to help you in your initial steps to conserve energy. With this goal in mind here are five simple ideas that we share with our clients and the public at large before we even discuss a conversion to a renewable energy source such as solar. These five ideas will start you on your green path to sustainability and will also save you money along the way.

1) **Replace your traditional lights** with Compact Fluorescent Light bulbs (CFL) or, even better, Light-Emitting Diode (LED) lights. CFL's are the less expensive of the two but don't last as long and can be dangerous if they break because of their chemical content. LEDs are becoming more plentiful and are available for indoor and outdoor use. Either choice will use much less energy and create the same amount of light as your incandescent bulbs. A great website to learn more is: <http://www.netl.doe.gov/ssl/usingLeds/> sponsored by the Department of Energy.

2) **A variable speed pool pump** will cut the energy use required to filter your pool by 30% to 90%, generally saving \$324 to \$1,356 in utility costs annually. It is easy to program and operate, offers ultra-quiet operation and operates at the minimum speed required for unmatched longevity. Plus, it has the added advantage of pushing water more slowly through your pool heater allowing more thorough heating and requiring the heater to burn less gas in the process. The average cost with installation is \$1,800 less utility and available city rebates.

3) **Consider a solar powered attic fan.** Ridge vents and passive ventilators are not the answer to properly venting desert homes. Basically, when the wind is not blowing, your traditional passive fan is not exhausting the hot air out of your attic and your air conditioner has to work much harder to cool the suppressive heat trapped in your attic space. A solar powered attic fan moves out hot air at 1,275 cubic feet per minute operating proactively; when the sun comes up, it's on! With temperature-sensitive thermostats, we can regulate the fans operation all year long. Average cost with installation is about \$900. More information can be found at <http://solardynamicsinc.com/>

4) **Solar Tubes** can brighten dark, cave-like areas in your home and business that are hard to light, like closets and hallways. They are an excellent way to use natural light to keep your lights turned off and save you money. Lighting using channeled or tubed lighting pathways has been around since the Pharaohs lit the deepest chambers of the pyramids by lining long passageways with reflective metals running from the sunlit outside of the structure to the inner sanctum. Average cost with installation for a 10" Sola Tube is about \$550.

5) **Changing out windows** or if you're building, choosing the correct glazing system (the glass and the space between the panes of glass) is one of the most important decisions you'll make. Warm Edge insulating glass spacers paired with high performance, spectrally-selective LOE glass along with a factory applied tint is an advanced glazing system with optimum performance and energy saving results. Though tinting existing windows in your home or business seems like an inexpensive solution for windows that are inefficient against intense desert sun, it can void the manufacturer's warranty, so check first. If you choose to go that route, V-Kool is an option that doesn't 'color' your glass.

**And finally, invest in a Solar System if you are serious about going green and saving more than money!** An energy generating appliance, this will dramatically lower and/or eliminate your energy bills. State rebates are available to offset up to 30 percent of the cost and if the five, previously mentioned energy saving measures are implemented first, the entire cost of the system will be much lower because it won't have to provide the same amount of energy your home uses now.

On an average home, it takes seven to ten years for the system to pay for itself, and with energy prices soaring the time may be much shorter. If you plan to sell your home before the estimated pay-off date, solar systems add greater value to your home than virtually any other improvement, sometimes as much as one and one half times their original cost! This is very attractive to the buyer since they are purchasing a home that has prepaid for its power!

Vincent Battaglia, is a founding member of the U.S. Green Building Council's Inland Empire Chapter and a general contractor as well as co-owner of Renova, a Valley based energy efficiency and renewable energy corp. that helps clients take steps to lower energy use before converting to a renewable energy source. He can be reached at 760-568-3413 or to learn more visit [www.renova360.com](http://www.renova360.com)