

# Poolwise

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**T**here is a tremendous rise in demand for swimming pools in Kenya today, especially for communal purposes. They have become part and parcel of urban life, and are reaching slowly into the rural areas mainly through learning institutions, hotels, clubs, and extending to private residences. What is important is the recognition of the different requirements for the diverse needs of the users. What we refer to as being *Pool wise!*

A critical growth sector for swimming pools currently is the private communal swimming pool. These are to be found in gated communities, whether high density apartments or low density townhouses. Such developments have varying parameters that are rarely considered during construction of pools, reason being cost as the overriding factor.

The initial players are the cost conscious developers and contractors who do not possess the expertise/finesse for the specialized pool construction but would want to maximize their profits. The end users would come on board when all the decisions have been effected and have to pay for the complete package whether it meets their needs or not.

The quality of swimming pools being constructed leaves a lot to be desired, and generally, do not meet the user demands and are exceedingly basic.

Another growth area for swimming pools is the hospitality sector which includes hotels and clubs. Factors such as location, weather conditions, type of business, and cadre of clientele and capacity of the facility are important in the determination of swimming pool requirements for these developments. In such a scenario, the swimming pool is not expected to give direct payback from investment in it but provides the much needed value addition to such properties.

Many leisure hospitality facilities would opt to have several different pools in different locations within the same facility. This would help in creating different feels in the various spaces, killing monotony and encouraging users to experience the different pools making them feel like they are in different spaces.

In contrast, business hospitality facilities have swimming pools that are designed for minimal usage. They are usually are much smaller. Time is an element for this clientele and such pools are mostly used in the mornings together with a fitness facility. Despite being smaller in area, they should be designed to accommodate a minimum of two swimming lanes and provide a substantial length swimming lane.

The area in which the swimming pool market has shrunk is the traditional upper class home swimming pool. More and more individual homes have been converted to multiple dwellings, individual plot sizes have reduced and most families opt to stay in gated communal homes due to financial restrictions and security considerations.

Within this sector, demand for accessories like alternative sanitizers and fancy finishes is high. It is in this group where you would find the best and worst swimming pools. The best usually use a full range of professional services, whilst the worst build on their own, import cheap equipment directly and treat the pool as normal construction. General artisans are used

to construct these pools and which result in a high number of poorly built swimming pools.

A swimming pool is a permanent fixture and its shell should not be tampered with. A pool cannot be extended without affecting its inner shell; neither can it be relocated without it losing its complete value. Bearing this in mind, the first decision is to decide what is the appropriate size and location.

For this, it is important to carry out case study visits of other existing swimming pools to gather on the strengths and weaknesses of each in terms of size, location and other factors. This study should extend even to actual swimming in these pools. It is quite shocking that a large number of swimming pool builders cannot swim and follow so called norms blindly to construct swimming pools.

For swimming enjoyment, length of the pool is the deciding factor. The cost outlay for a 10m by 5m rectangular pool and the cost outlay for a 12.5m by 4m lap pool is the same. In both, only two people can swim side by side, however increasing the length by 25% enhances the swimming experience. Depths range in recreational pools between 0.9m to maximum of 1.5m. These depths allow for recreational usage. The 2.3m deep pool is no longer ideal for recreational purposes as it renders half the pool

unusable for activities and the normal residential lengths do not allow for the diving cage of safety. Acceptable diving is a functional of both depth and breadth or length. In contrast large commercial pools may allow for deep ends with average 3.0m depths.

Besides Feng Shui and Vaasta, location is also extremely important for success of a swimming pool. Other factors such as proximity to food production, bathrooms, safety and visibility require consideration.

Safety is critical for swimming pools, and a boundary wall is highly recommended. One interesting location issue often overlooked is that swimming pools should be placed North South in Kenya to enable swimmers to use the pool at all times. If the swimming pool is placed East West, the morning sunrise and evening sunset usually blind the swimmers.

Pool wise shall be continued in the next issue...

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