



### **How to make your dream outdoor room a reality**

(BPT) - As the pandemic continues, outdoor spaces have become true extensions of the home. From a calm place to escape to an area to work and focus, outdoor rooms are being designed and utilized more frequently than ever before.

"Homeowners have shifted their focus from having spaces to entertain to making their homes more functional," says Joe Raboine, director of residential hardscapes, Belgard. "With the increased time spent at home, outdoor spaces have become a haven for both recreation and relaxation, as well as a valuable asset when it's time to resell."

With over 25 years as an outdoor designer, Raboine has unique insight into the outdoor living industry. He expects biophilic design trends to gain momentum in the future as people continue craving a connection to nature. This design approach prioritizes customizing spaces that flow with the natural landscape, benefitting both human health and environmental wellness.

As people spend more time outdoors from the safety and comfort of home, they are investing in the creation of outdoor rooms. Some of the most popular options that complement a property and are used frequently by homeowners are outdoor dining rooms, living rooms, kitchens and offices.

## Planning the right outdoor room for you

If you are considering adding a dream outdoor space to your property, it's important to properly plan. Start by exploring different designs and building plans that might be right for your needs and space.

Belgard Rooms is a great resource for planning outdoor rooms. The interactive site at [Belgard.com/Rooms](http://Belgard.com/Rooms) makes it easy to identify needs, pair designs that complement the style of your home and define your overall plan. Once you find one you like, you can download the plan for free and share it with contractors to get bids on the project.

"Belgard Rooms is segmented by room type and structured around how shape, color and texture work together to offer more options and make the design planning process easier," says Raboine.

Beyond convenience, this is beneficial from a timing and installation perspective. The templated designs can be customized to fit homeowners' needs and tastes. This means contractors require less time for the design and installation process, and you are able to enjoy your outdoor space sooner.

### Next steps: Budget tips

After you find a plan you like, it's time to consider budget and connecting with contractors. This insight from Raboine will help you in managing budget:

#### Research typical project costs in your area

Ask neighbors if they have completed similar projects. Get multiple quotes from several contractors. Go beyond labor costs and determine product costs online to understand the big picture financially. To give yourself options, look for alternative products that are similar in price.

#### Research contractors and gather bids

Get multiple bids from contractors. Given the current circumstances, this year is busy for contractors, in terms of both scheduling and inventory. So, keep in mind price is only one consideration; experience, licenses, references, turnaround time and satisfaction guarantees are other important factors.

#### Determine a payment schedule

Understand payment options and if materials are included in those fees. You may want to plan the project in phases to meet your budget. Additionally, you can ask about financing options, which may allow you to take advantage of construction efficiencies and avoid a phased build.

#### More complex projects cost more

Make sure you understand specific construction or engineering requirements. Linear design requires less cutting and building, resulting in lower costs compared to circular or winding patterns. Leveling your land can be costly, so consider building down into the slope.

"Schedules for contractors nationwide are filling up, so now is the time to take action with your outdoor projects by finding designs you like, gathering bids and making your dream outdoor room a reality," said Raboine.