



Creating More Room Outside

Tips for expanding your exterior living space.

By Lisa Sten CID, CGBP

Take advantage of California's incredibly mild climate by maximizing your real estate's potential (and your enjoyment in your home) with increased indoor / outdoor living spaces. Here are some tips to help you get there:

Develop a Plan

Identify how many people you want to accommodate and at what type of seating—will you need lounge chairs, a large dining table or relaxing chaises? The first step is a good floor plan, as Dining and Lounging Areas, Cooking Centers and Pool Areas often blend. Consider the traffic circulation between these outdoor rooms and their proximity to each other. A cozy gathering spot around a fireplace or fire pit is another great area to consider.

Install an Outdoor Kitchen

A basic outdoor kitchen might include a grill, sink and refrigeration. A more developed kitchen could include additional wine or beer refrigeration, a pizza oven, firewood storage or a rotisserie. Consider low maintenance materials for the countertops and rustproof stainless steel for appliances and cabinets.

Provide Sun Protection

An open-beamed structure, such as a pergola, or a deep roof overhang can help to create a permanent place for shading. A fixed, manually operated or electrically operated retractable awning is another solution that offers protection from the sun's UV light. These post-less awnings can be mounted on a wall above windows or doors, in the roof's eave or on the roof, leaving the floor area clear for tables and seating.

Manage the Views

Install an arbor with climbing roses or carefully place shrubbery and vegetation to lead your eye to a focal point in the yard. Fences, gates and other structures can conversely mask or "screen" unsightly views.

Don't forget to include high-quality exterior furniture, rugs and accessories and lighting. Also, provide portable heaters for chilly nights. Then all you have to do is invite the company!

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