



How To Make Your Outdoor Living Space Match Your Home's Interior

As homeowners focus on outdoor spaces, designers see an emphasis in flow from indoors to outside.

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07/07/2017

For many homeowners, especially in the Midwest where every minute of the short and sweet summer months are valued, maximizing a home's outdoor spaces is essential.

Kenneth Walter of Chicago-based [Gray & Walter Interior Design](#) has been working in the industry for more than 25 years, and said that one of the constants he has noticed in the Chicago area is that people seem to be embracing the outdoors more than ever before.

“I have seen more and more crossover areas in homes, where there are semi-covered areas connected to the home and outdoor areas that are totally open so people can enjoy the

outdoors, even if weather conditions aren't perfect," Walter said.

He added that trellises, pergolas, umbrellas and awnings are a great way to provide coverage that is both attractive and effective, and can mirror the color palettes used inside the home to create continuity with the outdoors.

In addition to adequate coverage, many people in the Chicago area that he helps design their home spaces are making the most of outdoor spaces with additional kitchens adjacent to family rooms, kitchens or living rooms to maximize flow between inside and outside.

"While people in the Midwest are thrifty, even wealthy people, they are starting to recognize the value of investment in outdoor spaces," Walter said. "We live for this summer weather all year and it is worth enjoying at home"

Walter's advice for homeowners contemplating outdoor design projects is to bring ideas to the table when working with a designer to ensure that they can meet the vision pictured in a client's head

"You need to have some kind of opinion on your space," Walter said. "I am seeing a greater sensitivity to this, but not necessarily for any reason. It seems there is such a greater interest in one's personal space that there was 10 years ago."

Walter also emphasized the importance of making sure an outdoor space not only fits with the indoors, but that it also fits with the preferences of each person living in the home.

He recounted an example of a client he worked with who was determined to have one outdoor table with an umbrella and one without, to provide the family with shady and sunny spaces. Soon after the project was complete, the client's husband requested another umbrella for the table that was originally intended to be in the sun.

While the look of a space is important, its functionality is also key for enjoyment, especially when Midwest homeowners only get a few months each year to enjoy the outdoors at home.