

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE BRINGS VALUE TO YOUR PROPERTY

Many of today's homeowners want more than just an attractive setting for their residence. They want useable outdoor spaces for cooking, entertaining and relaxing. A registered landscape architect is the professional with the expertise to design these 'fun and functional' outside rooms, or simply enhance the look of your commercial or residential property.

To get the design process off to a good start, bring your wish list (otherwise known as a program) to the initial meeting and be prepared to discuss how you envision using your yard. Your landscape architect should be advised of your likes and dislikes as well as your budget. He or she can give you an idea of the general costs associated with outdoor construction so you can prioritize items and phase the project if necessary.

A survey of the property will be needed early in the design process. The survey is typically used as a basemap for the design. It includes important information such as property setbacks, location of the house on the lot, existing trees and possible utility easements. If you do not have an up to date survey, the landscape architect can assist you in obtaining one.

Expect to meet with the landscape architect several times throughout the design process. Some of the issues to be addressed include pedestrian and vehicular circulation, design style and

entertainment requirements. The LA will also discuss your plant and other material preferences.

The first consideration is usually circulation, how to safely design the driveway, parking and walks. The drivers' vision should not be obstructed and adequate backup room is necessary. Determine the number of parking spaces desired and consider creating some spots using pervious surfaces for an ecological approach. Pervious paving will absorb rainwater which reduces the amount of runoff into waterways. Walkways can be planned to lead people where you want them to go. It's always a nice idea to place attention grabbing items along the path to create an interesting walk. These can be specimen plants, pieces of art, or a place to sit and admire the surroundings.

There are many design styles a client may request. Some ask for a formal garden look; others prefer a natural, free flowing style. Special gardens can be created on just a portion of the property; such as Japanese, Butterfly, Herb, Rose, or Water gardens. It's OK to request a 'low maintenance yard', specific plants or a special bloom color.

When planning the entertainment area, the landscape architect will take into consideration the features you are looking for and their space requirements. Tables and chairs, cooking elements, bar space, a fire place or fire pit, pools and spas, shade structures, fountains, night lighting are

some items that may be included on the plan. Many new outdoor products have been added in recent years so be sure to ask about the different options.

If you live in a community with architectural review guidelines, those regulations will be addressed. Finally, plan for energy conservation! Many new products are available for ‘going green’ in your yard. Design decisions as well as product selection can make a big impact on energy consumption. Knowledge in selecting drought tolerant plants, placing shade trees appropriately and reducing lawn bed square footage can keep you environmentally friendly.

From creating curb appeal when selling a home, to designing your dream outdoor kitchen, a landscape architect has the knowledge and experience to help. Sit back and relax!