

2026

# OUTDOOR LIVING REPORT



Decorators®



# WELCOME TO THE DECKORATORS ANNUAL **OUTDOOR LIVING REPORT.**

Outdoor spaces have evolved from weekend luxuries to year-round extensions of the home—places to connect, unwind, and express personal style. As homeowners invest more in their outdoor environments, the industry is responding with innovation, sophistication, and a deeper understanding of how people actually live outside.

In this year's Outdoor Living Report, we explore the trends shaping how contractors, designers, and homeowners approach decks, docks, patios, and everything in between. Contractors are taking craftsmanship to the next level, blending technology, precision, and artistry to deliver elevated results. In our "Ask Me Anything" segment, seasoned pros share insider insights on everything from color and material selection to pricing trends and what to watch for in 2026.

We also look at how decks and docks impact property value, what factors drive ROI, and how regular inspection and maintenance can protect investments for the long haul.

Whether you're a homeowner planning your next project or a professional shaping the future of outdoor living, this report offers expert perspective, inspiration, and data-driven direction for a fast-evolving market.

*Cover & Inside Cover Images:  
Bozo Builders*

*Photographer: Shmily Treger*

*Product Used:  
Deckorators' Summit decking featuring  
Surestone® technology in Cliffsider;  
Deckorators Picture Frame Deck Board  
featuring Surestone technology in  
Dark Slate; Deckorators Cable Railing*

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# INDUSTRY FORECAST 2026: THRIVING IN PLACE



By Michelle Hendricks,  
Director of Marketing,  
Deckorators®

In recent years, "home" has taken on a deeper meaning—not just as a place to live, but as a sanctuary for connection, comfort, and renewal. As more people choose to thrive in place rather than relocate, a powerful movement has emerged—**transforming outdoor areas into extensions of the home that enhance quality of life**, nurture overall well-being, and boost property value.

## Homeowners are prioritizing outdoor living upgrades

The outdoor living industry is experiencing unprecedented growth<sup>1</sup> as homeowners seek to create spaces that balance beauty, functionality, and longevity. Patios are becoming open-air living rooms, and backyards are evolving into personal resorts complete with kitchens, fire features, and other areas that encourage entertainment and community connection.

What we're ultimately seeing is the reemergence of connecting with others. We're making up for lost time and rediscovering the joys of entertaining in our backyards. Our outdoor spaces are no longer an afterthought—they are intentionally designed for maximum use all year long.

## The wellness factor remains strong

Thriving in place is about designing with purpose, living with intention, and embracing the outdoors as an integral part of everyday life. More importantly, a carefully crafted outdoor space is a place to slow down, connect with

nature, and prioritize mental and physical wellness. Across the design industry, we see a growing desire<sup>2</sup> to incorporate wellness features, such as spas, cold plunges, meditation zones, outdoor exercise areas, and natural elements that stimulate health benefits for the body and mind. Outdoor living products are evolving to support these features too, with non-slip decking for wet areas and glass railings to create a seamless connection to the surrounding natural elements, all of which support well-being.

## Investing to enjoy now: strategic remodeling for the long game

By evolving their existing environments, homeowners are redefining what it means to invest in real estate. Outdoor living projects consistently deliver some of the highest ROIs in home improvement, offering enduring value that goes far beyond resale. These transformations aren't simply aesthetic upgrades—they're strategic investments that yield both emotional and financial returns.

A comprehensive 2025 joint research project<sup>3</sup> with This Old House, Houzz, Brown Jordan

Outdoor Kitchens, Grand View Research, and the National Kitchen & Bath Association (NKBA) found that outdoor living is a priority for 75% of homebuyers, with many upgrades bringing 100% return on investment (ROI) to home sellers.

Source Key

1. HTF Market Insights (2025). Outdoor living spaces market report. <https://htfmarketinsights.com/report/4369901-outdoor-living-spaces-market>

2. Elle Decor (2023, October 25). Wellness gardens: Outdoor design trends. <https://www.elle-decor.com/design-decorate/trends/a65252903/wellness-gardens-outdoor-design/>

3. Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Daly (2025). Outdoor living upgrades that boost home values in 2025. <https://www.bhhsdaly.com/blog/25/Outdoor%2BLiving%2BUpgrades%2Bthat%2B-Boost%2BHome%2BValues%2BIn%2B2025>

Photo: Cascade Fence & Deck  
Photographer: Nicholas Lackides  
Products Used: Deckorators Voyage decking featuring Surestone® technology in Khaya; Deckorators Picture Frame Deck Board featuring Surestone technology in Dark Slate; Deckorators Aluminum Contemporary Railing



*Photo: California Deck Pros*

# ABOUT **DECKORATORS**

As a member of the UFP Industries, Inc., family and a leader in the composite decking industry, we take pride in elevating outdoor design to new levels.

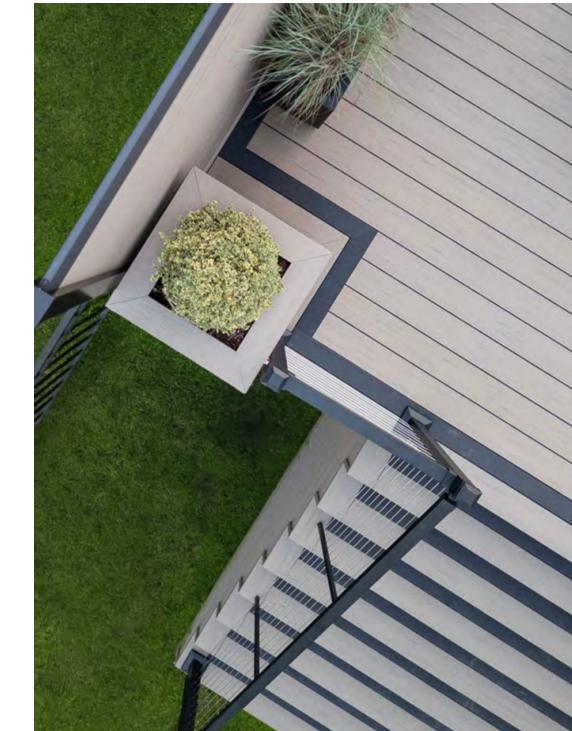
UFP Industries is a multibillion-dollar enterprise with subsidiaries around the globe and 219 facilities worldwide. Headquartered in Grand Rapids, Michigan, with affiliates throughout North America, Europe, Asia, and Australia, our operating subsidiaries manufacture, distribute, and sell a wide variety of wood, alternative building materials, and industrial products worldwide.

The Deckorators® brand specifically offers outdoor decking, railing, and components that provide durability without sacrificing style. Deckorators is proud to provide elevated design solutions for outdoor living spaces of all shapes and sizes.

# WHAT'S NEW

In 2026, Deckorators® is helping homeowners and builders Stand Out™ by focusing on bold design, smart tools, and products that inspire confidence.

This year isn't about chasing trends—it's about refining and elevating outdoor spaces for long-term enjoyment.



## Altitude Composite Decking—Class B Flame-Spread Rating

Altitude brings Class B flame-spread performance to select Western U.S. markets in early 2026. Available in Sequoia, Highland, and Trailstone, and designed for everyday backyards and wildfire-prone regions, Altitude is made from 95% recycled plastic and renewable sawdust, spans a 16" on-center profile, and features three-sided capping for moisture protection.

## Vista Decking—Upgraded Fire-Resistant Core

Vista now includes the same fire-resistant core and Class B flame-spread rating as Altitude, giving homeowners and pros more options for safe, stylish, and low-maintenance decking. It retains enhanced traction, anti-fade surfaces, and lasting durability, providing peace of mind while creating spaces that stand out.

## Venture Decking—New Color: Shoreline

Venture decking introduces Shoreline, a contemporary tone that adds warmth and depth. Durable, low-maintenance, and finished with natural wood grain, Shoreline is a fresh option for homeowners seeking a modern, elevated look.

## Glass Rail Post Kit—Now Available

Deckorators Glass Rail Post Kit provides flexible post-to-post configurations for seamless glass panel installation. It delivers clean, modern sightlines and simplifies installation, allowing homeowners to elevate their railing designs with confidence and style.

## Expanding Proven Performance

Deckorators is also expanding the availability of its most in-demand products. Summit and Voyage decking continue to deliver performance and style with Surestone® technology, while our full line of aluminum and composite railing, including contemporary, cable, and glass systems, offers modern elegance and unobstructed views.

## A Year To Stand Out

With new tools, expanded distribution, and continued innovation, 2026 is a year of focus and refinement. Deckorators is helping homeowners and pros create outdoor spaces built for confidence, beauty, and impact, where every detail stands out.

# TRENDS IN OUTDOOR LIVING

## TREND 1

**Millennial Gray Is Out: Black Is Back**

## TREND 2

**Swim, Socialize & Savor: Creating Zones**

## TREND 3

**Lighting, Railing & Accessories**

## TREND 4

**The Art & Craft of Docks & Waterfront Projects**

## TREND 5

**Designed With Pets in Mind**

## TREND 6

**Impactful Entrances: Rethinking Curb Appeal**



# MILLENNIAL GRAY IS OUT: BLACK IS BACK

Bold, timeless, and undeniably modern, black has emerged as the defining accent in outdoor design this year. Millennial gray has officially taken a back seat, and contractors across regions are embracing black posts, beams, and trim as anchors for sophisticated, high-impact spaces. Paired with warm, natural tones, black creates depth, contrast, and an architectural edge, transforming decks from simple functional surfaces into elevated design statements. Bold accents are a rising trend in outdoor living spaces, according to 37% of design experts, reflecting a nationwide appetite for refined, striking aesthetics.<sup>1</sup>





Photo:  
Premier Outdoor Living

Products Used:  
Deckorators Voyage decking featuring Surestone technology in Costa and Khaya;  
Deckorators Picture Frame Deck Board featuring Surestone technology in Dark Slate

## MILLENNIAL GRAY IS OUT: BLACK IS BACK

### The Bold Side of Luxury

Black doesn't whisper. It commands attention. It defines edges, frames architecture, and gives contrast to every detail, from decking patterns to built-in furniture. Paired with warm neutrals and natural textures, it creates a modern, inviting canvas where even small touches like hidden charging stations, subtle inlays, or integrated seating become showpieces. For homeowners, black is the quickest, smartest way to turn a deck into a destination. Make it bold and make it intentional...because ordinary has officially left the deck.



### Deeper Shades, Lasting Impressions

"Homeowners are gravitating toward rich, deeper shades: dark-stained woods, durable composites, and steel accents that look luxurious but require minimal upkeep. The right combination elevates the design visually and ensures the space performs for years," says Sean Collinsgru of Premier Outdoor Living in Southern New Jersey. Wood, composite boards, stone, steel, and cable railings are being mixed in ways that feel deliberate and refined. Even subtle touches, like using dark slate accents or contrasting inlays, elevate the entire design.

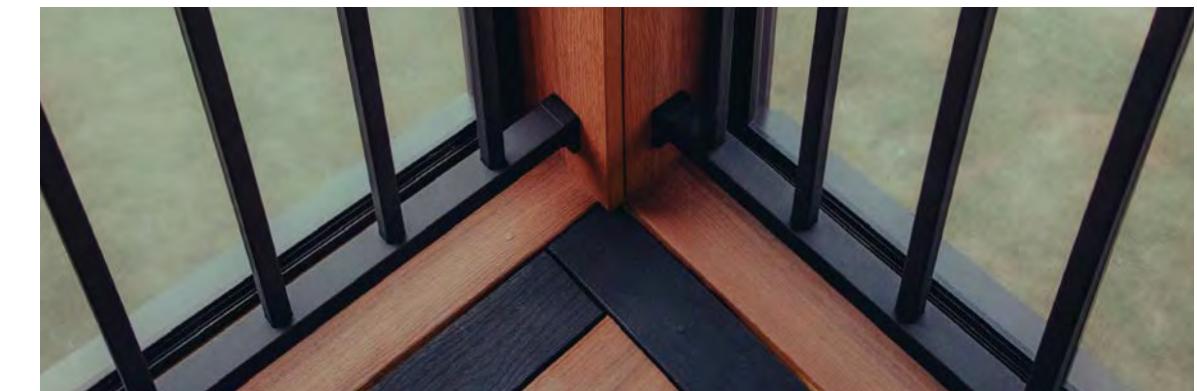


Photo (Top):  
Premier Outdoor Living

Products Used:  
Deckorators Voyage decking featuring Surestone technology in Costa; Deckorators Picture Frame Deck Board featuring Surestone technology in Dark Slate

Photo (Bottom):  
Custom Outdoor Renovations

Products Used:  
Deckorators Voyage decking featuring Surestone technology in Sedona; Deckorators Picture Frame Deck Board featuring Surestone technology in Dark Slate; Deckorators Contemporary Aluminum Railing

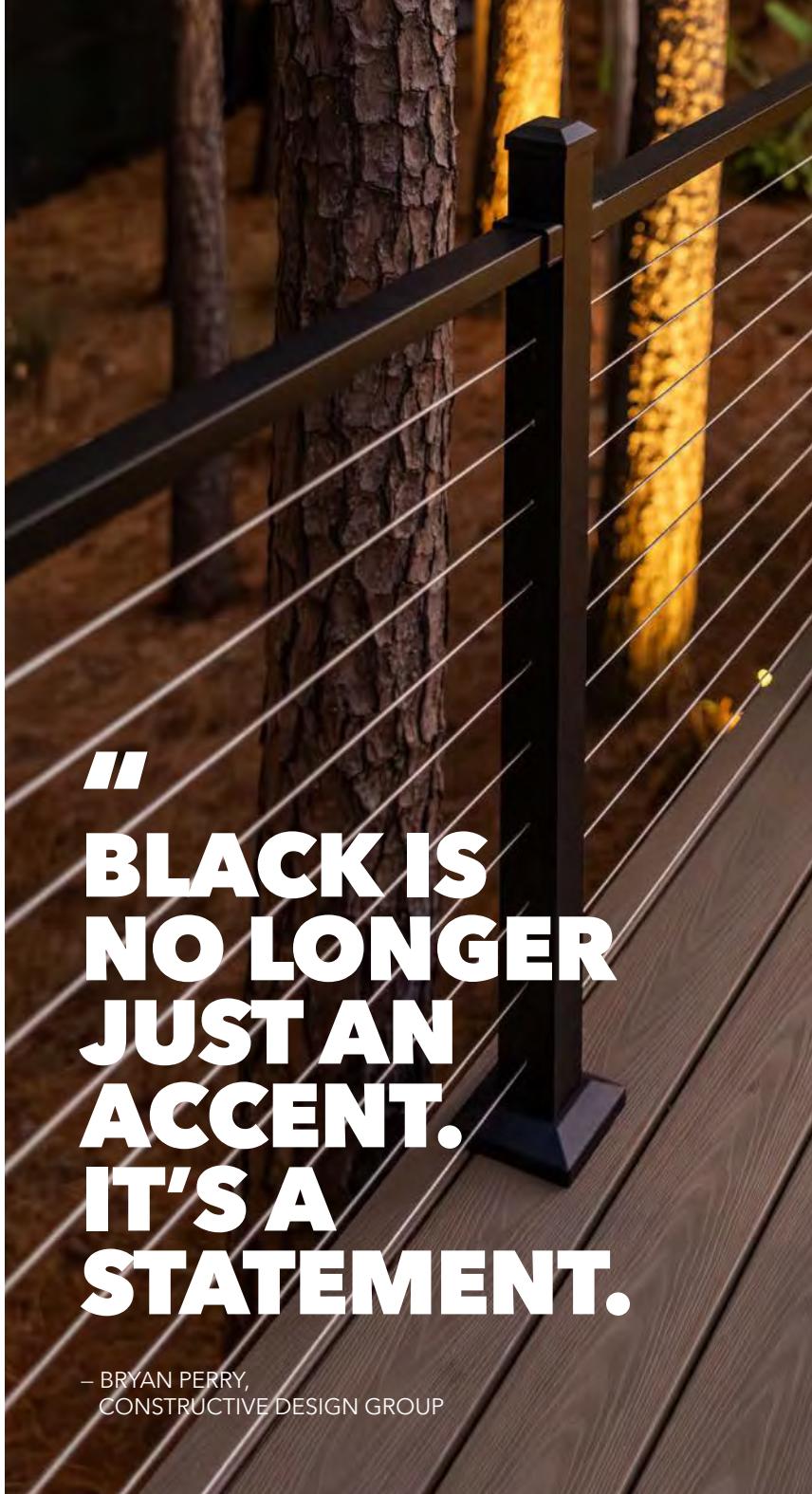


MILLENNIAL GRAY IS OUT:  
BLACK IS BACK

## Decked Out in Black

"Homeowners want outdoor spaces that do more than just accommodate. They want to make a statement," says Bryan Perry of Constructive Design Group in North Carolina. "They're looking for areas that feel intentional, where each zone has a purpose, from lounging to entertaining." Perry notes that combining subtle earth tones with black accents, through decking patterns or furniture, creates a modern yet inviting aesthetic.

Jason Promes of Promes Construction in South Dakota echoes this, explaining that dark contrasting board zones not only frame views dramatically, but also give multilevel decks a sophisticated rhythm. Drake Ussery of Dau Construction in Northern California has found that deeper, moody finishes can bring intimacy without overwhelming the natural surroundings, even in wooded settings. Across the board, designers are layering function and style, turning decks into fully realized extensions of the home.



**“  
BLACK IS  
NO LONGER  
JUST AN  
ACCENT.  
IT'S A  
STATEMENT.**

— BRYAN PERRY,  
CONSTRUCTIVE DESIGN GROUP

Source Key

1. Fixr (2025). Outdoor living trends 2025. <https://assets.fixr.com/resources/outdoor-living-trends-2025.pdf>

Photo (Left): Premier Outdoor Living  
Products Used: Deckorators® Voyage decking featuring Surestone® technology in Costa and Khaya; Deckorators Picture Frame Deck Board featuring Surestone technology in Dark Slate

Photo (Right): Constructive Design Group  
Products Used: Deckorators Venture decking in Sandbar; Deckorators Contemporary Cable Railing

# SWIM, SOCIALIZE & SAVOR: CREATING ZONES

One space, many uses. In 2026, homeowners are dividing outdoor areas into distinct zones that support different activities while still feeling connected.

For many homes, at the center of it all is the pool, an investment (typically with an average 56% ROI) that signals relaxation and enjoyment with loved ones.<sup>1</sup> Whether the day calls for family pool time or relaxation in the hot tub, today's outdoor waterside spaces are defined by zones, each with their own purpose and mood.

Homeowners don't just want one gathering spot. Instead, they are designing full experiences that transition seamlessly throughout the day. These distinct areas are intentionally positioned to help you capture views, make hosting a breeze, and make the most of every moment, both in the water and out.





Photo:  
Constructive Design Group  
Photographer:  
Richard Barlow

Products Used:  
Deckorators® Venture Decking  
in Sandbar

## SWIM, SOCIALIZE & SAVOR: CREATING ZONES

### Material World

Indoor or outdoor? It's becoming harder to tell. The modern homeowner desires a series of "outdoor living rooms" that feel as intentional and elevated as interior living areas but still grounded in nature. Around water features, this translates to a thoughtful mix of materials: rich decking tones, textured concrete, and artful paver inlays chosen to differentiate spaces while maintaining a cohesive aesthetic. The end result? A multidimensional landscape that feels curated and connects the interior to the exterior.



### Fresh Interpretations

Like any room inside the home, each outdoor zone begs for finishing touches, accent lighting, built-in banquette seating, and storage, entertainment consoles, and slowly spinning fans. "If an outdoor space has you doing a double take, that's by design," says Bryan Perry of Constructive Design Group. "They look more and more like well-appointed interiors." In some instances, homeowners are even opting for the installation of HVAC, adding a new level of comfort. It's the ultimate merger of utility and elegance.

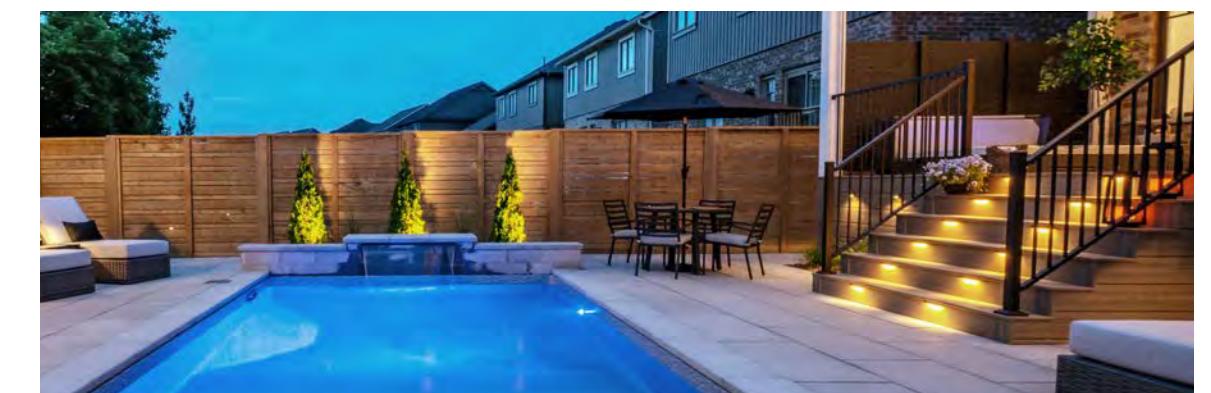


Photo (Top):  
Simcoe Decks  
Photographer: Quinn Metcalf  
(Quinn Metcalf Media)

Products Used:  
Deckorators Voyage decking featuring Surestone® technology in Costa; Deckorators Picture Frame Deck Board featuring Surestone technology in Dark Slate

Photo (Bottom):  
Simcoe Decks  
Photographer: Bri Wardle,  
Elevated Productions

Products Used:  
Deckorators Voyage decking featuring Surestone technology in Costa



## The Tranquility Effect

SWIM, SOCIALIZE & SAVOR: CREATING ZONES

"To live by the water is to borrow a bit of calm from the world each day. It centers you, restores you, and turns ordinary moments into something special," Perry says.

Water has the power to instantly transform an outdoor space into a sanctuary. If an in-ground pool is out of reach, striking fountains and other water features are a wise alternative. According to Houzz, nearly one in five renovating homeowners invested in a

water feature in 2025,<sup>2</sup> proof that serenity is a growing design priority.

Today's outdoor environments are being shaped around that sense of calm. Spaces for socializing, dining, or quiet reflection are deliberately placed, sometimes perched above a blue-hued, fiberglass pool or nestled beside a garden or waterfall. Each zone works together to create an atmosphere that feels less like a backyard and more like a personal resort.

“  
**THESE ZONES NEED TO BE THOUGHTFULLY DESIGNED TO MATCH THE FEEL OF THE REST OF THE HOME.**

— RANDY STEYERT,  
SOUTH FORK DECKING

Source Key

1. Angi (2024, September 5). What is the ROI on a pool? <https://www.angi.com/articles/pool-roi.htm>

2. Houzz (2024, June 25). 2024 U.S. Houzz Outdoor Trends Study. <https://www.houzz.com/magazine/2024-u-s-houzz-outdoor-trends-study-stetivw-vs~176497534?vm=thumbs>

Photo (Left): Constructive Design Group  
Products Used: Deckorators' Venture decking in Sandbar

Photo (Right): South Fork Decking  
Photographer: Toan Dao, Toan Dao Media LLC  
Products Used: Deckorators Voyage decking featuring Surestone® technology in Mesa; Deckorators Picture Frame Deck Board featuring Surestone technology in Dark Slate

# LIGHTING, RAILING & **ACCESSORIES**

As is the nature of outdoor living trends, we see the transformation of functional elements into highly considered design opportunities. Pieces once thought to be purely functional elevate to aspirational status, giving homeowners new avenues to add personality and luxury to their outdoor spaces. Details like lighting, railings, and hardware are no longer afterthoughts. They're the key pieces that bring your vision to life.





Photo:  
Bozo Builders  
Photographer:  
Shmily Treger

Products Used:  
Deckorators® Summit decking featuring Surestone®  
technology in Cliffside; Deckorators Picture Frame Deck  
Board featuring Surestone technology in Dark Slate;  
Deckorators Cable Railing

## Design Within Reach

"Railings were long considered the 'safety scaffolding' of outdoor projects," explains Pat O'Keefe of O'Keefe Built in Colorado. "Until recently, we only had a handful of options for materials and finishes. These elements weren't exactly showpieces, but their role is absolutely changing." Now, railings, banisters, and other accessories are playing a more powerful aesthetic role, bringing refined materials to exterior environments. "You're constantly reaching for railings and banisters, really feeling the material in your hand," says O'Keefe. "For that reason alone, they deserve deeper design consideration."



## Optimized Views

From glass panels to contemporary cables, railing choices can make all the difference. Some options open views or create entirely unobstructed, floating effects. More structural components can create a sense of sanctuary, intimacy, and privacy. "I love starting with a homeowner's ultimate goal to bring railings into the vision," explains Jonathan Moeller of Colorado Custom Covers & Decks. "Do they want a 360-degree view? An optical illusion? A sense of extreme privacy? We can make choices that have spectacular payoff, particularly on multilevel decks and rooftops."



Photo (Top): O'Keefe Built  
Photographer:  
Kacy Lawson Photography

Products Used:  
Deckorators Voyage decking featuring Surestone  
technology in Costa and Sedona; Deckorators  
Aluminum Railing in Bronze with drink rail in Sedona

Photo (Bottom):  
Colorado Custom  
Covers and Decks

Products Used:  
Deckorators Voyage decking featuring Surestone  
technology in Mesa and Tundra; Deckorators Aluminum  
Railing in Bronze



## LIGHTING, RAILING & ACCESSORIES

## Bright Ideas

From clean, sleek geometry to organic elegance, a homeowner's unique style shines in the details. But railings are just the beginning: outdoor lighting is becoming an art form all its own. "We're designing layered systems that solve specific needs," explains Michael Scott of Simcoe Decks in Central Ontario, Canada. "Step lights for safety, subtle wall washes that highlight texture or make vertical surfaces feel more expansive, and under-rail lighting that adds depth without glare."

Scott sees light design growing in popularity for outdoor water features, too: "We recently completed a project with a moody, layered glow that dances across the glass. That interplay between light, shadow, and structure adds visual rhythm and dimension, which is something homeowners are craving."



Photo (Left): Simcoe Decks  
Photographer: Bri Wardle, Elevated Productions  
Products Used: Deckorators' Voyage decking  
featuring Surestone® technology in Costa

Photo (Right): Premier Outdoor Living  
Products Used: Deckorators Voyage decking  
featuring Surestone technology in Tundra,  
Deckorators Privacy Screen System

# THE ART & CRAFT OF **DOCKS &** **WATERFRONT** **PROJECTS**

From sunrise coffee to sunset cocktails, life by the water has never been more desirable or more design-driven. For today's homeowners, a dock isn't just a launch point—it's a lifestyle. Waterfront living is surging in popularity, with lakefront or riverfront properties seeing up to 25% higher resale value compared to their inland counterparts.<sup>1</sup>

Over in Knoxville, Tennessee, contractors like Jason Varney of Dock & Deck have mastered the art of turning waterfront challenges into lasting moments of leisure. "Every waterfront project comes with its own set of hurdles, from tight site access to unpredictable water conditions," Varney explains. "Our job is to solve those challenges so homeowners can enjoy a dock that's not only strong and low-maintenance, but a space where they can truly relax and make memories on the water."





Photo:  
Sundeck Solutions

Products Used:  
Deckorators' Voyage decking featuring  
Surestone® technology in Sierra

## Strength That Welcomes You Home

Waterfront construction is rarely straightforward. Site constraints, shoreline regulations, and the integration of electrical systems for lighting demand meticulous planning and precision. But when done right, the results speak volumes. Reinforced framing, corrosion-resistant fasteners, and moisture-tolerant composite decking materials all contribute to a dock designed for the long haul. "Homeowners want the peace of mind that comes from a dock that looks beautiful and stands up to the elements," says Michelle Hendricks, Director of Marketing at Deckorators®. "Today's high-performance composites allow them to have both."



## Ready. Set. Jet (Ski).

Waterfront docks do far more than provide access to the water—they shape how homeowners experience it. More lakefront homeowners are transforming their docks into multiuse entertainment zones, complete with integrated lighting, modular furniture, and even outdoor kitchens. Homes with waterfront improvements like private docks or enhanced shoreline access can increase in value by as much as 10%-30% compared to similar properties.<sup>2</sup> "It's all about creating spaces that feel intentional," says Hendricks. "Whether you're diving in or winding down, the dock becomes an everyday destination."



Photo (Top): Deckorators  
Products Used:  
Deckorators Decking  
Photographer: Ryan Hull

Photo (Bottom): Dock & Deck  
Products Used:  
Deckorators Voyage decking featuring  
Surestone technology in Khaya

**“DOCKS SHOULD BE DURABLE, PRACTICAL, AND INVITING, BECAUSE THEY ARE MEANT TO BE USED, ENJOYED, AND ADMIRED EVERY DAY.”**

— JASON VARNEY, DOCK & DECK

## THE ART & CRAFT OF DOCKS & WATERFRONT PROJECTS

Photos: Dock and Deck  
Photographer: Ryan Hull  
Products Used: Deckorators® Voyage decking featuring Surestone® technology in Costa (Left) and Khaya (Right)

## Vacation Vibes

Everyone dreams of being near the water. “It’s calming, grounding, and makes every day feel a little bit like a vacation,” says Varney. And it’s no wonder: studies show that proximity to water can reduce stress levels by up to 22%.<sup>3</sup>

For those not building from scratch, even small-scale additions, like floating docks or tiered decks, can deliver major rewards in both enjoyment and value. Whether it’s

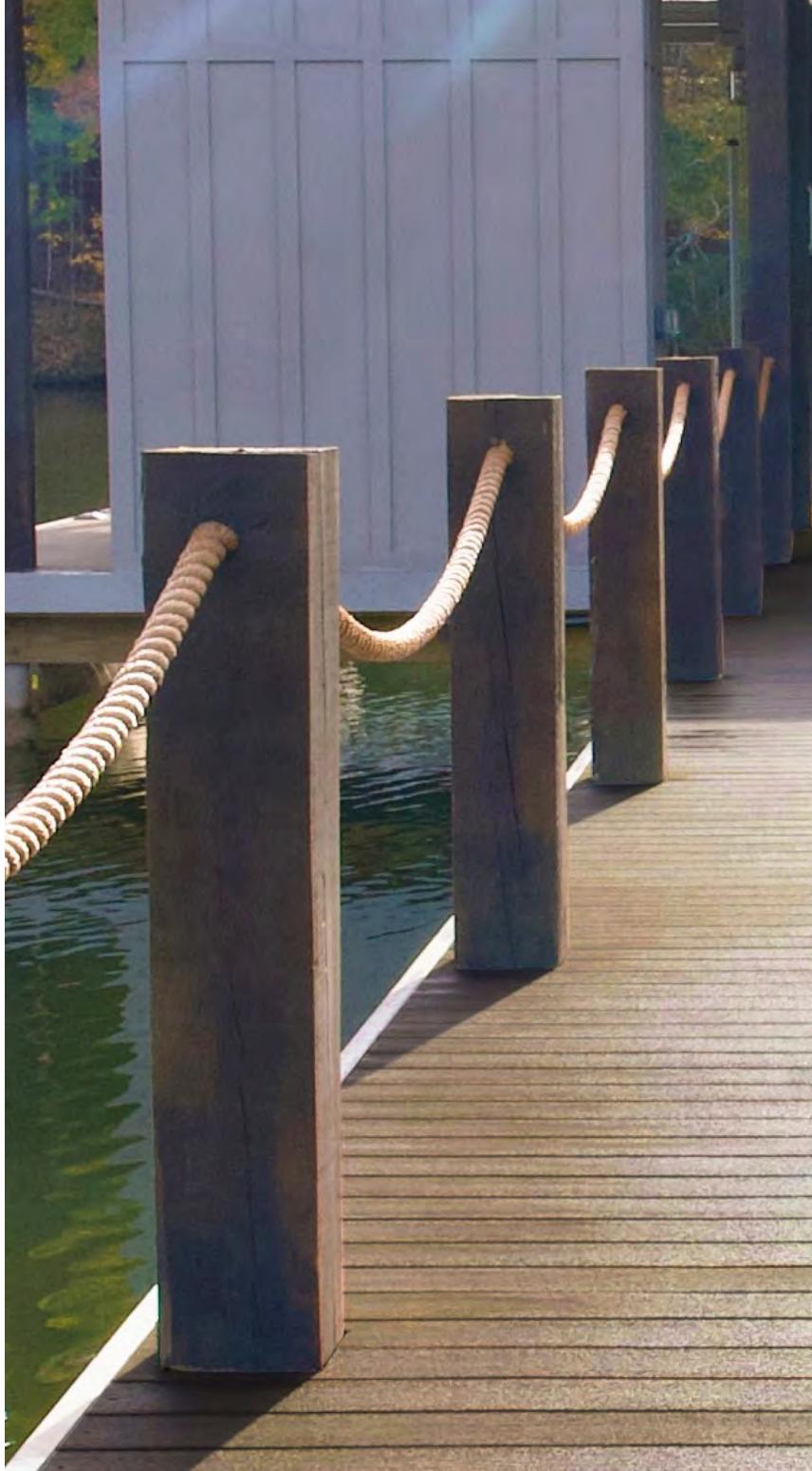
morning yoga, afternoon swims, or quiet moments under the stars, enjoying these spaces proves that on the water, the small things really are the big things. Waterfront living is more than a pretty view. It’s a sense of connection—to the water, to nature, and to the quieter currents that keep life flowing.

### Source Key

1. Homes.com (2025, May 1). The pros and cons of living near the water. <https://www.homes.com/learn/pros-and-cons-of-living-near-the-water/>

2. Lakefront King (2025, March 5). How adding waterfront access enhances your lakefront property’s value. <https://lakefrontking.com/how-adding-waterfront-access-enhances-your-lakefront-property-s-value/>

3. Today (2024). New study shows being near water can reduce anxiety, rejuvenate. <https://www.today.com/video/new-study-shows-being-near-water-can-reduce-anxiety-rejuvenate-147246149734>



# DESIGNED WITH **PETS IN MIND**

Outdoor living design has gone to the dogs...in the best way possible. In the US, an estimated 94 million households own at least one pet, according to the American Pet Products Association.<sup>1</sup> That's approximately 71% of all households and an increase of over 14% in just two years' time. To say people love their pets is an understatement, and their passion for these pawed family members—and the subsequent rise of pet-conscious design—is influencing home living trends in major ways.





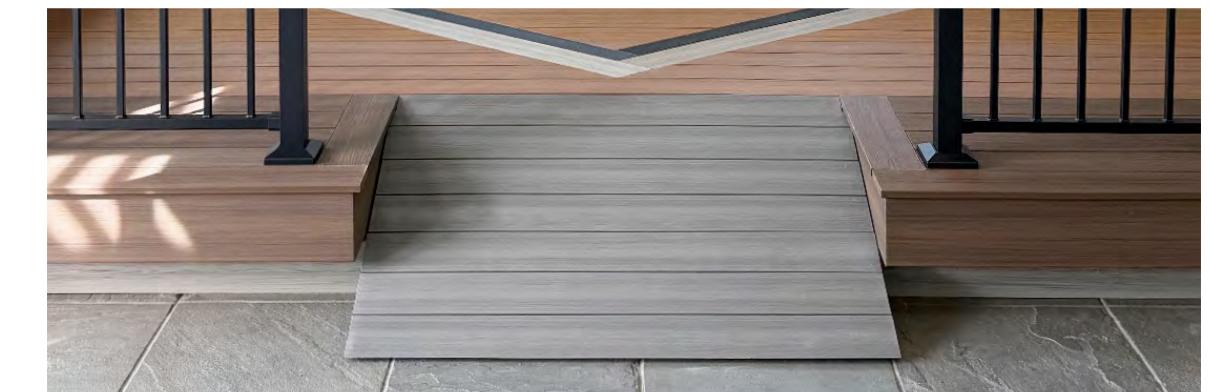
Photographer:  
Deckorators®

Products Used:  
Deckorators' Voyage decking featuring  
Surestone® technology in Sedona

DESIGNED WITH PETS IN MIND

## Freedom To Frolic

When it comes to pets (namely dogs), a sense of free-range roaming and play is the ultimate goal for homeowners—and we see them paying premiums for outdoor spaces with seamless indoor-outdoor flow. From sleek, stylish doggy doors and ramps to pet-safe decking in durable, low-slip materials, choices aren't just taking pets into account—they're prioritizing them. The result is outdoor areas that look luxe and more akin to stylish interiors, but tailor-made to withstand all weather and active pets.



## The New Dog House

It's no surprise that dog houses are getting their rightful glow-up. With custom features (windows, flower boxes, built-in water features and beds), elevated materials, and strategic outdoor placement, these pup shelters feel more like authentic extensions of the primary home, bringing interior choices outdoors. "We're seeing limitless potential for these outdoor spaces created especially for pets. In other words, Sparky has never had it so good," says Leif Wirtanen of Cascade Fence & Deck in Vancouver, Washington.

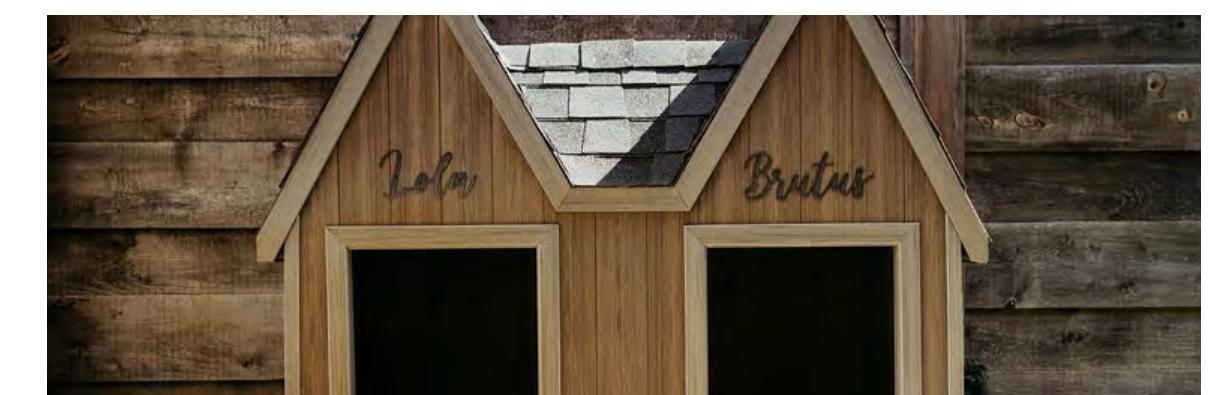


Photo (Top):  
South Fork Decking

Products Used:  
Combination of Deckorators  
decking and railing products

Photo (Bottom):  
Edwards & Sons Complete  
Property Maintenance

Products Used:  
Deckorators fascia board in Khaya, Deckorators Voyage  
decking featuring Surestone technology in Tundra

Photographer:  
Zakoor Photography



## Family & Fur Zones

DESIGNED WITH  
PETS IN MIND

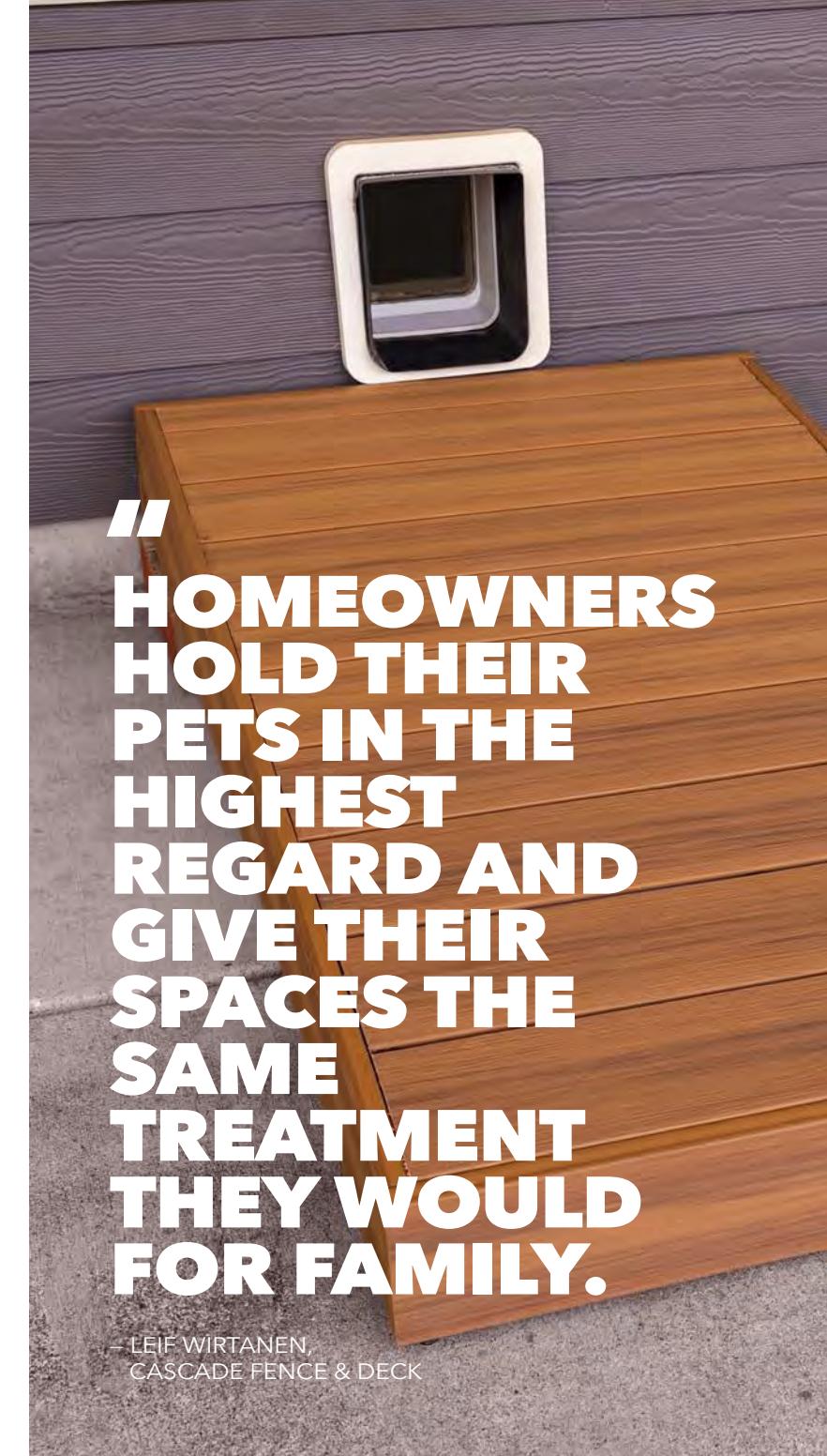
More and more, today's outdoor spaces are home to multiple zones, including dining, lounging, entertainment, and even meditation. Another key zone? One for the pets. Almost like miniature dog parks, these confined spaces offer safe, designated spots for pets to play and lounge. Premium materials like aluminum railing, decking, and

decorative pavers render pet spaces expertly designed and highly intentional. "Pets are family, and that's something we think about more and more in our builds," Wirtanen says. "Designing decks with pet access in mind just makes sense. It changes how people use and enjoy their homes every day."

Source Key

1. Insurance Information Institute (n.d.).  
Facts + statistics: Pet ownership and insurance.  
<https://www.iii.org/fact-statistic/facts-statistics-pet-ownership-and-insurance>

Photos: Cascade Fence & Deck  
Photographer: Nicholas Lackides  
Products Used: Deckorators® Voyage decking featuring Surestone® technology in Sedona; Deckorators Cable Railing



“**HOMEOWNERS HOLD THEIR PETS IN THE HIGHEST REGARD AND GIVE THEIR SPACES THE SAME TREATMENT THEY WOULD FOR FAMILY.**”

— LEIF WIRTANEN,  
CASCADE FENCE & DECK

# IMPACTFUL ENTRANCES: **RETHINKING CURB APPEAL**

First impressions matter more than ever. According to a recent study from Thumbtack and Nextdoor, 54% of homeowners say neighborhood curb appeal impacted their home-buying decision.<sup>1</sup> That influence is driving a noticeable shift in outdoor living design. Homeowners are no longer limiting lifestyle-driven spaces to the backyard. Instead, front porches are being reimagined as intentional, livable extensions of the home, borrowing cues from the back deck to elevate curb appeal and everyday experience.





Photo:  
South Fork Decking

Photographer: Toan Dao,  
Toan Dao Media LLC

Products Used:  
Deckorators Voyage decking featuring  
Surestone® technology in Sierra with Mesa inlay

## A Place To Pause

Your front porch isn't just a passthrough. It's a place to gather and connect. Thoughtful designs now include more space for seating, blurring the line between entryway and living space and making outdoor access more welcoming and purposeful. "Homeowners are designing front entries with the same care once reserved for backyard retreats, incorporating all the elements needed to encourage lingering," says Michelle Hendricks, Director of Marketing at Deckorators®. "The result feels welcoming, intentional, and aligned to how people want to live today."



## Bringing the Back Deck Forward

Design elements once exclusive to rear decks are moving front and center. Think expansive decking surfaces, integrated railings, and layouts that prioritize comfort and connection. By applying deck materials and designs to the front of the home, homeowners are turning curb appeal into an asset, creating a sense of place without compromising functionality. This shift reflects a broader redefining of outdoor living, one that values visibility, social interaction, and everyday usability as much as aesthetics.



Photo (Top):  
Villandry Home & Outdoor Living

Products Used:  
Deckorators Voyage decking featuring  
Surestone technology in Khaya

Photo (Bottom):  
FWD Construction

Products Used:  
Deckorators Voyage decking featuring Surestone technology in Costa and Sierra; Deckorators Cable Railing in Bronze



IMPACTFUL ENTRANCES:  
RETHINKING CURB APPEAL

## An Open Invitation

As front porches become more livable, they are also becoming more expressive. Homeowners are using materials, finishes, and architectural details to make a clear statement from the street. Wide steps double as seating. Railings frame views rather than obstruct them. Lighting sets the mood well before the front door opens. These entry spaces are no longer background elements. They are front-row features that signal thoughtful design and a home that invites people in before they ever step inside.



“  
**THE FRONT OF YOUR HOUSE DESERVES AS MUCH ATTENTION AS THE BACKYARD DOES.**

— RICH VILLANDRY JR.,  
VILLANDRY HOME & OUTDOOR LIVING

Source Key

1. Thumtack (2024). Boosting Your Home's Curb Appeal Affects More Than Just Your Resale Value. <https://blog.thumtack.com/boosting-your-homes-curb-appeal-affects-more-than-just-your-resale-value-92805fe36d5c>

Photo (Left): Premier Outdoor Living  
Products Used: Deckorators Voyage decking featuring Surestone technology in Costa and Khaya; Deckorators Contemporary Aluminum Railing

Photo (Right): Villandry Home & Outdoor Living  
Products Used: Deckorators Voyage decking featuring Surestone technology in Khaya

# INSIDER INSIGHTS FOR OUTDOOR PROJECTS

## INSIGHT 1

**Helping Homeowners  
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# HELPING HOMEOWNERS NAVIGATE THE DECKING DECISION

A Contractor's Guide to Color, Materials, and Lifestyle Fit



By Randy Steyert, Owner of South Fork Decking



Photo: South Fork Decking  
Photographer: Toan Dao,  
Toan Dao Media LLC  
Products Used: Deckorators®  
Voyage decking featuring Surestone®  
technology in Mesa with a Khaya inlay

One of the biggest hurdles homeowners face during outdoor renovations isn't permits or budgets—it's decision paralysis when choosing decking colors and materials. After seeing countless samples, excitement can quickly turn to stress. That's when they turn to us, not just as builders, but as guides.

Today's decking market offers endless possibilities—composite options, color palettes, railing systems, and performance features. More choices are great, but they demand structure in the decision process. Here's how I help clients find the perfect deck for their lifestyle.

## START WITH FUNCTION, NOT JUST FINISH

Before talking colors, I ground the conversation in how the deck will be used. Do they entertain often? Have kids or pets? Is it sunny or shaded?

Lifestyle questions determine practical needs—like cooler surfaces for full-sun areas or slip-resistant boards near pools. Some high-performance composites even stay cooler underfoot or resist scratching from dogs. Function first, color second. A family with kids and shade trees might need different decking

than someone hosting sunset dinners on a rooftop terrace.

## PAIR DECK AND RAILINGS WITH THE ENVIRONMENT

Once function is clear, we move to aesthetics—often where homeowners get stuck. They might love a sample in-store but can't picture it outdoors. I tell them to think of the deck as an extension of their home and surroundings.

**Complement, don't compete:** For homes with warm siding tones, choose boards with brown or taupe undertones. Coastal or modern homes pair beautifully with grays or driftwood hues.

**Use contrast wisely:** Dark railings with light decking frame views beautifully—matching tones create a seamless, minimalist look.

**Leverage natural light:** Always view samples outside in daylight against the landscaping. The right color reveals itself quickly.

If uncertainty lingers, digital renderings or small sample layouts help homeowners see

how colors and textures play together—clarity follows quickly.

## FOCUS ON LONG-TERM LIVING, NOT FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Decking isn't a short-term decision—it's a decades-long investment. I help clients look beyond showroom shine to everyday usability.

**Slip resistance:** Ideal for decks near pools or in rainy climates.

**Heat retention:** Dark boards get hot—lighter or heat-dissipating composites stay comfortable barefoot.

**Pet-friendliness:** Scratch-resistant boards and smoother textures protect both pets and surfaces.

**Maintenance:** Natural wood offers beauty, but composites offer beauty, too, and save time and cost in upkeep.

**Timelessness:** Color trends can change quickly. Neutral tones that complement the home's architecture hold long-term appeal.

## SIMPLIFY WITHOUT LIMITING OPTIONS

When choices feel overwhelming, I curate two or three "deck combos" tailored to their lifestyle:

**Modern:** Ash-gray decking, matte black cable railings, clean lines.

**Natural:** Warm brown boards, bronze rails, wide stairs for gatherings.

**Family-friendly:** Slip-resistant boards, soft neutrals, safety gates.

Framing it this way shifts the question from "Which color do you like?" to "Which lifestyle fits you best?"—empowering homeowners to decide with clarity and excitement.

Choosing decking isn't just about color or material—it's about how people live. As contractors, our role is to turn uncertainty into confidence by guiding clients with expertise and empathy. When we balance function, aesthetics, and lifestyle, we don't just build decks—we build outdoor spaces that feel like home.

# PRICING & WHAT TO WATCH OUT FOR

A Q&A with Sean Collinsgru & Catherine Lippincott of Premier Outdoor Living



Sean Collinsgru, Owner of Premier Outdoor Living



Catherine Lippincott, Director of Development, Premier Outdoor Living

## What are homeowners' biggest concerns when it comes to budgeting for an outdoor project?

**Catherine:** Budget anxiety is huge right now. Studies show that in 2025, 4 out of 5 homeowners went over budget on their last renovation, and two-thirds of them took on some level of debt.<sup>1</sup> That's often because people aren't asking the right questions upfront. They focus on short-term costs or fixate on a few big-ticket items without exploring alternatives.

**Sean:** Exactly. We see homeowners tense up because they're only thinking about the immediate price tag, not the long-term value or maintenance costs. Taking the time to help them understand the whole picture upfront can make a world of difference. What we do is break down the project step by step, from materials to labor to maintenance, so homeowners can clearly see both the upfront investment and the payoff over time.

## Are there common myths about decking prices you often have to dispel?

**Sean:** One big misconception is that wood is always cheaper than composite. Sure, wood might cost less initially, but it comes with ongoing maintenance: sealing, staining, repairing, and replacing boards. Depending on your climate and lifestyle, composite decking is often a smarter investment.

**Catherine:** And beyond the boards themselves, people underestimate the unseen costs, like framing, substructure, or specialized labor. Cutting corners here almost always leads to problems and bigger expenses down the road.

## How should homeowners approach costs without losing sight of their vision?

**Sean:** Think long-term. Outdoor spaces can recoup up to 80% of their value,<sup>2</sup> which makes them one of the highest-return investments a homeowner can make. Look at the bigger picture: durability, design

integrity, and day-to-day enjoyment. Even if you're tweaking materials or phasing your project, a thoughtfully planned space can still pay off when it comes time to sell.

**Catherine:** And a well-designed space isn't just about resale value. We encourage homeowners to focus on what matters most to them and explore alternatives that fit their budget. That could mean prioritizing key features like a dining area for the family or a simple outdoor play area. For budget-conscious homeowners, we might recommend selecting materials that give the same look for less, or phasing the project over time to ease up front costs. Even if you can't do everything at once, thoughtful choices and smart alternatives can help you achieve the vision you've been dreaming of.

## Any advice for homeowners who are worried about budget surprises?

**Sean:** Ask lots of questions and get clarity early: materials, labor, permitting, access challenges...everything. Work with a contractor who can walk you through all the costs. Planning ahead prevents surprises.

### Source Key

1. Fortune (2024, November 4). How much does it cost to renovate a house? Homeowner debt, do-it-yourself renovations. <https://fortune.com/2024/11/04/how-much-does-it-cost-to-renovate-a-house-homeowner-debt-do-it-yourself-renovations/>

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Photo: Premier Outdoor Living  
Products Used: Deckorators' Voyage decking featuring Surestone® technology in Tundra



**Catherine:** And remember, there are options. Materials, layouts, and even finishes can often be adjusted to fit your budget without compromising the design or vision. Flexibility and open communication are key.

## Final takeaway for homeowners?

**Sean:** Don't get hung up on the lowest bid. Look at the materials, craftsmanship, and how the space will serve your family over time. Choose materials that resist wear, finishes that hold up over time, and layouts that suit your long-term needs.

**Catherine:** When you first create your budget, leave a little wiggle room for unforeseen issues that may pop up during the construction phase. Also, do your research and don't be afraid to get involved. Good contractors will keep you on budget and offer solutions that you may not have considered in your original planning.

# DOCKS & WATER-ADJACENT PROJECTS

## Key Principles Your Contractor Should Consider When Designing the Waterfront Build of Your Dreams



By Rich Villandry Jr., Co-Owner at Villandry Home & Outdoor Living

When I design a deck, I think beyond the structure. I think about the way it will actually be used. From that first step out with coffee in hand to evenings spent unwinding by the shoreline, a well-built deck becomes the foundation for life's best moments, especially when it comes to waterfront projects. Every plank, post, and fixture should feel intentional, solid underfoot, and ready for whatever the day brings.

### BRINGING YOUR VISION TO LIFE

No two shorelines (and no two homeowners) are alike. That's why every project begins with understanding how you want to live by the water. Do you picture launching kayaks at sunrise, hosting friends at the golden hour, or creating a peaceful spot for reflection? The layout should move the way you do.

**Plan with purpose:** I map every square foot around function, from slip placement and water depth to traffic flow and shade. Wider landings make entertaining effortless, while lower platforms offer easier access for swimming, paddleboarding, or tying up boats.

**Design for connection:** Transitional zones, such as steps that double as seating or built-in planters that define a lounge area, create a smooth, natural flow from the home to the water, making the entire waterfront feel like one continuous living space.

### Choose materials that perform:

Moisture-tolerant composites, corrosion-resistant hardware, and concealed fasteners keep the structure clean, durable, and low-maintenance. Texture and tone matter, too. Lighter colors stay cooler underfoot, and subtle grain patterns bring the look of wood without the upkeep.

### HOW TO MAKE THE BIGGEST SPLASH WITH YOUR WATERFRONT DECK

A waterfront project needs character, craftsmanship, and purpose. If you're building or upgrading your deck, it's about creating something that feels distinctly yours and will perform beautifully for the years to come. Here are some key considerations before you start your project:

**Does it reflect your home?** Start with cohesion. Pull design cues from your home's architecture. Think of creating similar roof-

lines, repeating color accents, or carrying trim details through railings or shade structures. Prioritize your design preferences through refined contrasts like black aluminum railings against natural composite tones or soft, integrated lighting that highlights the water's edge. These details will help create a signature look that feels intentional and entirely your own.

### Will it perform against the elements?

Waterfront builds bring their own challenges: shifting water levels, constant exposure, and expansion or contraction from changing conditions. A deck that truly stands out in performance is one that's built and maintained with those realities in mind. Yearly inspections are non-negotiable, especially after storms or seasonal transitions.

### Other considerations for waterfront decks:

- Check for piling movement or shifting after storms or freezes.
- Inspect transitions between land and dock structures for stability.
- Watch for corrosion or early wear from salt or freshwater exposure.

### PARTNERING WITH A PRO

Many contractors offer walkthroughs, maintenance plans, and seasonal checklists to keep homeowners on track.

### Here's what a maintenance partnership can include:

- Annual safety inspections
- Personalized care plans for your material and climate
- Seasonal cleaning and sealing guidance
- Structural and hardware assessments

With the right care and professional oversight, a quality waterfront deck should continue to perform and look its best season after season. Maintaining your waterfront area ensures that every morning coffee, evening reflection, and family gathering happen safely and smoothly, allowing you to fully enjoy the peace, beauty, and benefits of life on the water.



# INCREASING HOME VALUE & MAXIMIZING ROI

A Contractor's Perspective on Outdoor Investments



By Leif Wirtanen,  
Cascade Fence & Deck

As a contractor, I've seen firsthand how the right outdoor upgrades can transform a property's curb appeal and its appraised value. But I've also seen homeowners pour thousands into projects that looked great to them but fell flat with buyers. The difference comes down to smart planning, market awareness, and design choices that balance personal style with broad appeal.

## DESIGNING WITH RESALE IN MIND (WITHOUT LOSING YOUR STYLE)

When you're investing in outdoor spaces, think about them in two layers: what you love now and what a future buyer will value later.

### Start with timeless elements:

High-quality stone patios, composite decking, and well-structured garden beds are safe bets because they appeal to nearly everyone.

### Layer in personal style with accents:

Use outdoor furniture, lighting, and planters to reflect your personality. These can be swapped out easily if you're selling.



Photo: Cascade Fence & Deck  
Photographer: Nicholas Lackides  
Products Used: Deckorators' Voyage decking featuring Surestone® technology in Sedona

**Avoid overly niche features:** A custom koi pond might be your dream, but it could be a maintenance headache for a buyer. Instead, choose features that enhance usability, like built-in seating or a firepit.

## OUTDOOR UPGRADES THAT DELIVER THE BEST ROI

Based on years of jobs and feedback from appraisers and real estate agents, here are the top features that tend to pay off:

**Decks and patios:** A well-constructed deck or patio can return 60%-80% of its cost in added value,<sup>1</sup> especially when using low-maintenance materials.

**Outdoor kitchens:** In the right market, an outdoor kitchen with a built-in grill, fridge, and prep space is a huge draw.

**Professional landscaping:** Thoughtful landscaping can boost perceived value by 10%-15%,<sup>2</sup> especially when it improves curb appeal.

**Energy-efficient outdoor lighting:** LED pathway and accent lighting not only improve safety but also highlight property features at night.

**Functional fencing:** Privacy and security are always a plus, particularly in suburban and urban neighborhoods.

## THE TAKEAWAY FOR HOMEOWNERS

Outdoor investments should make your home more enjoyable and more marketable. Focus on functional, durable, and aesthetically versatile features. Add your personality in ways that are easy to change and consider your local market before starting any major project.

Source Key

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# DECK INSPECTION & MAINTENANCE

A Contractor's Guide to  
Deck Protection (Because a  
Sound Deck Means a Clear Mind)



By Jonathan Moeller,  
Owner of Colorado Custom Covers

After years of building and restoring decks, one of the biggest lessons I've learned is this: your deck isn't a "set it and forget it" project. It's an investment that needs care to stay safe and structurally sound. Whether it's a mountainside dock or a backyard retreat, maintenance is what keeps your outdoor space performing for the long haul.

According to the International Association of Certified Home Inspectors (InterNACHI), only about 40% of existing residential decks are considered up to code and safe.<sup>1</sup> This means millions of homeowners are unknowingly standing on structures that could be failing beneath their feet. Regular inspections and preventive care are essential.



## WHY ROUTINE CARE PAYS OFF

Homeowners often underestimate what it takes to keep a deck in top shape. But small steps make a big difference over time. Here's what regular maintenance protects you from:

**Costly repairs:** A loose board or small leak left unchecked can lead to framing rot or the need for a full structural replacement.

**Safety hazards:** Unstable railings, corroded fasteners, and hidden decay are the leading causes of deck failures, especially in older builds.

**Loss of value:** A poorly maintained deck can be costly and reduce home value. But a well-maintained deck can bring a 70%-80% return on investment when selling your home.<sup>2</sup>

## LOW-MAINTENANCE, NOT NO-MAINTENANCE

Composite decking has changed the game for homeowners who want less work and more durability, but even the best materials need a little TLC. Keep in mind:

**Clean regularly:** Sweep and rinse to remove debris that traps moisture or stains.

**Avoid harsh pressure-washing:** Use gentle cleaning methods to preserve surface integrity.

**Inspect frequently:** Look for fading, loosened fasteners, or movement at the ledger board, small signs that can signal bigger issues.

## DON'T OVERLOOK WHAT YOU CAN'T SEE

The most critical parts of any deck are often the ones hidden from view. These structural components work quietly but are key to longevity:

**Framing and joists:** These absorb the bulk of weather and weight. Rot or warping here is a major red flag.

**Flashing and fasteners:** Corroded metal or missing flashing allows water to infiltrate and damage the structure.

**Supports and posts:** Even treated lumber deteriorates over time—periodic evaluation ensures load-bearing stability.

When talking with homeowners, I always stress that framing failures, not surface issues, are often what lead to costly repairs, and regular professional inspections are the best prevention.

Source Key

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