

complimentary

outdoor home

OUTDOOR LIVING DESIGN + LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE

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NY/CT

Working
with
Landscape
Architects
*with Hoffman
Landscapes*

Smoking
Hot Ribs
with Viking Grills

The Destination Garden

Creating a Fairytale in Your Backyard
with Total Turf Landscaping





behind the scenes

*From the end to the beginning... a landscape architect
can make your final vision a successful reality.*

WORDS AL PIROZZOLI PHOTOS HOFFMAN LANDSCAPES



LEFT: To balance against the colossal scale of the home, the landscape architect utilized bi-axel symmetry in the pool layout. The center line spears through the fence and fireplace pergola; then from the lounging area, pool and spa to the dining area on the opposite side.
HERE: Architectural landscape drawings incorporate all views of a property, ensuring every element fits properly and in the right balance and proportion.

The morning sun offers its soft rays to glisten and dance on the pool's surface. Relaxing on the lounge you glance over the rim of your sunglasses, beverage in hand. A smile of satisfaction breaks out at the beauty of your new pool and stunning outdoor kitchen. The azure sky doesn't dare interrupt your serenity – not a cloud. Now it's hard to remember the overwhelming details the project entailed. Plans, codes, site evaluation, grading problems all became highly detailed forays into the unknown. You've come to realize one can only wish it was as easy as a pool man pointing and saying, "There's a flat area to put the pool in." Yet solution-illusion often occurs when it comes to landscape projects. We tend to override logic when our hearts are set on something. Consider: it's one thing to purchase a tennis racquet. It's quite another to think that qualifies you to play tennis. It's not realistic! We can however, approach a pool, terrace or other structure with that same illusion. If only it were so!

It's All About Scope

This is where engineering behind the project and design comes in. Yes, you read that correctly, engineering! The word conjures up bridges and power plants, but when an added structure covers ground surface, engineering applies. Although it may seem that way, adding a structure to a property is not a single item existing in a vacuum. Landscape structures added to a property affect the rest of it in vari-

ous ways. For most homeowners this is not common knowledge. Codes, regulations, drainage and topography make interconnectivity a serious challenge, making project scope vital: understanding how the totality of a property is affected by adding surface structures. The sheer volume of details, and codes involved could overwhelm a home owner, and overlooking any key factor could halt a project. "Bringing a truly comprehensive view to the many components involved in a project is crucial. Nothing on the property is isolated. It's imperative we address every single factor involved to achieve the client's goals," notes Brian Cossari, a landscape architect with Hoffman Landscapes, Inc., out of Wilton, CT.

That's where a landscape architect can make a significant difference in a project's successful outcome. They live and breathe holistic, encompassing every detail related to the property and the proposed project. Homeowners are often shocked to find that the pool they want in a particular spot can't work because the septic tank intersects the space or a well is located nearby. That's when they recall their realtor telling them what a great spot that would make for a pool. The expertise of a landscape architect includes finding a balance between a client's vision, codes governing structures, and the inherent issues the property itself presents. The landscape architect also helps to avert problems that might otherwise go undetected until a project is underway which translates to budget and time overruns. Brian Cossari, a landscape architect with Hoffman Landscapes, Inc., highlights



LEFT TOP: An espalier was placed at the upper sitting area to break hard architectural lines. Patio areas were tiered and linked together by introducing planting areas within the hardscapes to blend transitions.

the fact. “It’s more than understanding the property as a whole, it’s the ability to work within constraints, and deliver what the client envisions. A great deal of what’s involved is unseen, such as micro-climates a small, a specific place within an area as contrasted with the climate of the entire property, to mention only one. In simple terms the landscape architect must be able to find solve

the problems and deliver the vision.” By beginning with the end in mind the landscape architect assures a less stressful experience.

There May Be Tradeoffs

Most of us don’t think of a swimming pool as a surface structure because it’s in the ground. Not so! There are two overarching factors governing outdoor structures: pervious (allowing water to flow through) and impervious (stopping water from flowing through). In some towns only one quarter of a lot can remain impervious which directly affects landscape plans, and a trade-off can result if the structure goes over the allotted percentage. Here’s how it works. Let’s say you add a pool. If the surface coverage exceeds the impervious percentage, something else on the property must be removed. In some cases an asphalt driveway, a shed or other impervious structures must be removed to achieve code percentages.

Trade-offs are virtually unknown to most homeowners, therefore detailed pre-planning is crucial. In reality it goes far beyond the simple look of the property. “One big challenge is assumptions. For instance, an area may look perfectly flat, but may require a grade change and retaining wall. There could be wetlands that require the local conservation office to approve. One of the



SHOWN HERE: Poor construction led to drainage problems which caused this patio to collapse. The landscape architect corrected the problem by excavating below the basement floor level. Crushed footing drains and septic piping were replaced and a drainage mat was installed against the foundation. New backfill material was distributed and compacted in lifts to allow concrete caissons to rest on undisturbed grade providing a solid support for the concrete patio slabs.



benefits we bring as landscape architects is our training as stewards of the land,” says Geoffrey Middleleer, a landscape architect with Middleleer Land Design out of Ridgefield, CT.

The Importance of a Building Envelope

Codes governing structures on a property can be tricky to navigate. To meet codes and their client’s vision, landscape architects must create a kind of symbiosis in the total project. To that end, knowledge of codes and workarounds must result in balanced interconnectivity. This again is where a landscape architect can be of tremendous value. Matthew Biron, a landscape architect with Hoffman Landscapes, Inc., puts it this way: “All our work begins with what we call a building envelope. This encompasses everything related to the project as a whole. Projects should begin with a feasibility study to determine what will be required to achieve the expected result without surprises. The study also reveals something critical – what the land itself is telling us.” The point here is that even if there is a flat space to accommodate a pool and fire pit, or outdoor kitchen, there may be slopes in the property that affect run-off water, which might require an engineer’s review. Retaining walls or code compliant fencing may be required. With the study complete, next steps are conceptual drawings, client feedback, revisions, and approvals. “The design process is critical. Design drawings are a valued necessity because they are drawn from different sides of the property; then compared to determine that everything is going to fit. In other words, it’s all about pro-

HERE: This site was unusually flat and integrating a pool next to the existing terrace would have completely consumed the view. Elevations were created using raised planting beds which separated major areas of the yard.

portions. Building architects deal with proportions as well. They study Greek and Roman designs to understand visual impact.” says Richard Bergman, landscape architect with Richard Bergman Architects out of New Canaan, CT.

The project actually moves toward reality after permits are obtained, which in itself is no small task. An amazing amount of creativity, engineering, and thoughtfulness goes into a project to achieve the client’s vision while meeting codes (which are often at odds) and keeping the aesthetics of the design in tact. Working with a landscape architect offers homeowners a partner who understands and applies the engineering aspect as an advantage. Engineering know-how can often overcome barriers that might otherwise thwart the intended design. Benefits do accrue in partnering with a trusted, knowledgeable professional on your side. Engineering expertise brings a project to fruition. And, after all, the landscape vision realized is the whole purpose for undertaking the project in the first place. ■

RESOURCES

Hoffman Landscapes
203-834-9556
www.hoffmanlandscapes.com

**Geoffrey Middleleer
Middleleer Land Design LLC**
203-403-0766
www.midlanddesign.com

**Richard B. Bergmann
Landscape Architect**
203-966-9505
Brgmnn2004@yahoo.com