



# palisade

life along the Hudson

July/August 2007

## ORGANIC SENSATION

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## All Decked Out

BY DIEGO CUPOLO

Living in a city can leave one feeling cramped and isolated. Some people need to come home from work and get a little down time, preferably mixed with a dose of fresh air. In response, developers have been designing homes with a greater focus on outdoor spaces – and buyers are answering with a sigh of relief. From decks to rooftop terraces, residents are making use of the little space they have and redefining their private outdoor living areas.

Some new deck designs are transforming the traditional backyard into a fully functional kitchen. More homeowners are installing water lines for sinks and making spaces for built-in barbeques and ranges, says John Craig, owner of A & C Construction and a salesperson at The Home Depot in Secaucus. When the space is available, Craig says his customers ask for wrap-around decks and sometimes have windows removed to make room for sliding doors. When space is not available, using metal balusters instead of bulky wood supports can help urban dwellers fit a deck in their courtyard.

Building materials are another aspect of deck construction that has been evolving. When shopping on a budget, Craig finds most of his customers buy pressure-treated wood and stain it every couple of years to keep it healthy. The average price for a 150-square-foot, pressure-treated wood deck with stairs and railings ranges from \$4,000 to \$5,500.



This deck in Montclair was designed by Adam Hoppe Design, LLC, Hoboken. Landscaping and installation by Hufnagel Landscaping, Inc., North Bergen.

"Because the market is so overloaded with different materials right now, I think people are starting to go back to the basics," Craig says.

For an additional \$1.60 per square foot, some people are buying composite materials (a combination of vinyl and woods) because they are thought to be easier to maintain. Craig advises against this because, he says, vinyl products can warp in hot temperatures. It's also highly flammable and releases toxic fumes if it burns.

"Composite decks are ugly," says Valerie Hufnagell, co-owner of the local firm Hufnagell Landscaping. "You can't make vinyl look like wood. People get tricked into getting it because they think it's easy to maintain, but you have to clean it just like any wood product."

Some homeowners are looking at other options, such as exotic, durable woods that have become more available. Ipe, for example, is a dense Brazilian wood that resists rot and insects better than any other wood, giving it a 35-year minimum lifetime guarantee, according to Hufnagell.

Hufnagell prefers to build decks with ipe because of its strength and ability to fade into a silvery gray, like cedar, if the surface is left unfinished. Customers can also choose to apply an oil to maintain the wood's dark brown color. She also recommends that buyers make sure the wood is certified by the Forestry Stewardship Council to deter illegal logging in the rain forest. At \$50 a square foot, ipe may be more expensive than other materials, but Hufnagell insists that an "educated customer will buy a better product."

## Up On the Roof

Replacing that black, bubbly stuff on city rooftops with an eco-friendly "green roof" has become another trend starting to make an appearance on this side of the Hudson River.

Green roofs can be rooftop terraces or gardens designed to reduce the building's electrical needs by supplying better insulation, meaning it will keep an apartment cool in the summer and warm in the winter. They can also collect non-potable water for your apartment's dishwasher and various appliances. Though living in a building with a green roof may cost more up

front, the resident will save an average of 30 percent off their heating and electrical bills, according to Katherine Silver, a broker for the Empire Realty Group who is currently working toward an EcoBroker Certified Designation.

Buyers looking for a high-rise property will also find the industry is focusing more on outdoor living spaces. New developments in Edgewater and Cliffside Park, such as One Hudson Park and Aurora Over the Hudson, include terraces and rooftop gardens to put residents at ease.



says. "In an urban area like this, people are workaholics and need to be able to relax in a private place that is not their living room." ♦

Backyard deck in Hoboken made with ipe, a tropical hardwood. Hot tub, grill and child's playhouse. Bottom photo: Hoboken backyard, tropical hardwood deck with wrought iron spindles. Both designed by Adam Hoppe Design, LLC. Landscaping and installation by Hufnagell Landscaping, Inc.



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"Making better use of rooftops is the next step for areas throughout the Gold Coast, especially with the incredible views of New York City," says Chris Winslow, director of marketing for Tarragon Development.

Nelson Chen, co-owner of the Chen Agency Realtors, has already bought a place in the Aurora Over the Hudson building because the pool area reminded him of something you would see in South Beach, Miami. Chen says outdoor space is very important to 90 percent of his customers.

"Outdoor living areas are going to be more of a selling factor, and the buildings that have it now will be much more appreciated in the future," Chen



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