



Outdoor Dream Rooms Give a Chicago Family More Space for Living

Alfresco dining, a built-in spa and an outdoor TV lounge transform this urban yard



Annie Thornton February 24, 2019
Houzz Editorial Staff

The owners of this home in Chicago's Lakeview neighborhood enjoy being outside, whether they're relaxing, entertaining or playing with their three young children, and they wanted their outdoor space to better reflect their lifestyle and design taste.

They turned to architecture firm dSpace Studio, whose work they had discovered and followed on Houzz years before, to transform their underutilized backyard and side yard into a warm, contemporary private space that would allow their family to get outside and have a good time.



Landscape at a Glance

Who lives here: A couple and their three children, ages 6, 9 and 11

Location: Lakeview neighborhood of Chicago

Size: 1,783 square feet (166 square meters)

Architects: Kevin Toukourmidis, principal, and Robert McFadden, project manager, both of dSpace Studio

The redesign created four new outdoor gathering areas: an elevated dining deck, a spa terrace, a TV lounge and a side yard. “We wanted to create different spaces, much like a house,” says architect Kevin Toukourmidis, principal at dSpace Studio.

Ipe (a resilient tropical hardwood), blackened steel, stainless steel and porcelain that looks like stone tie the four outdoor rooms together, contrasted by the lush greenery planted throughout the backyard. The architect and the homeowners edited the material palette to only elements that would create the calm, contemporary aesthetic the homeowners desired and that were resilient, semineutral and low maintenance. The house was painted charcoal to complement and contrast the landscape materials.



The new outdoor kitchen and dining deck projects off the home's family room, with large sliding glass doors making the indoor-outdoor connection more seamless. "The big idea here is having a dining room and kitchen right off the main house," Toukoumidis says, which allows the family to eat outside often.

The blackened steel fire feature at the end of the deck is a focal point for the outdoor space as well for the indoor family room. It's framed with ipe paneling mounted on the garage. String lights overhead create an alluring glow and define the outdoor dining space.

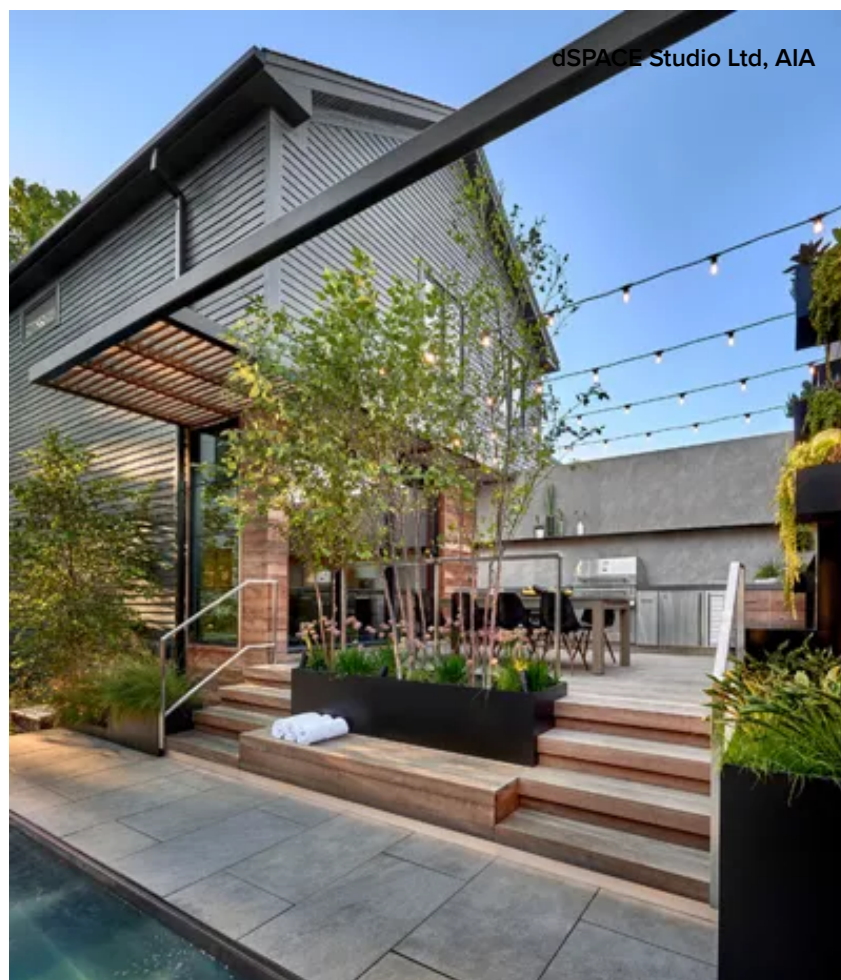


Wall-mounted, black-painted steel planters filled with succulents and golden creeping Jenny (*Lysimachia nummularia* 'Aurea') create more visual interest and break up the expansive ipe wall.



The deck also features an outdoor kitchen, including a grill, a sink, beverage fridges and built-in ipe-and-stainless steel cabinets. LED lighting under a bent plate steel shelf illuminates the workspace, just as you'd see in an interior kitchen. Basaltina (a durable volcanic stone) is used for the countertop, with a coordinating stone-effect porcelain for the backsplash.

Outdoor appliances and stainless steel cabinets: Kalamazoo Outdoor Gourmet; porcelain on backsplash: Waterfall, Quarziti 2.0 collection, Mirage



Spa Terrace

A spa terrace is four steps down from the dining deck, slightly elevated from the ground and in the sunniest portion of the yard. The property slopes 5 feet from the house down to the edge of the property. Instead of creating fewer but more dramatic level changes, the design team opted for smaller ones. “These micro levels define each zone and ease the transition from home to yard,” says architect and project manager Robert McFadden.

Dura Heat river birch (*Betula nigra* ‘BNMTF’), ornamental onion (*Allium* ‘Millenium’) and Pennsylvania sedge (*Carex pensylvanica*) grow in the steps’ built-in planter. Throughout the project, plantings provide color and visual interest, shade and screening. They also reinforce the calm, contemporary style the homeowners wanted in the design.

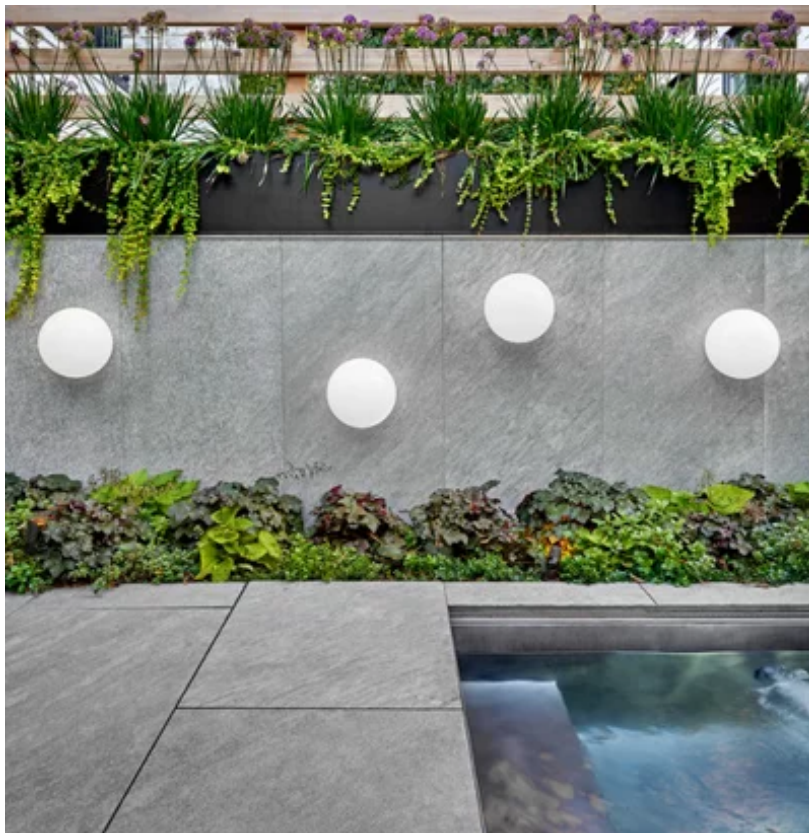
Planter lighting, step lights and other ambient fixtures create a subtle evening glow.



The spa, measuring 5 feet wide by 14 feet long by 4 feet deep, is heated year-round. An automatic cover protects it when not in use.

Porcelain tile covers the terrace. The low-maintenance and durable material is able to withstand Chicago's freeze-thaw cycle. By choosing this tile, the architects were able to use larger pieces than they would have been able to with stone.

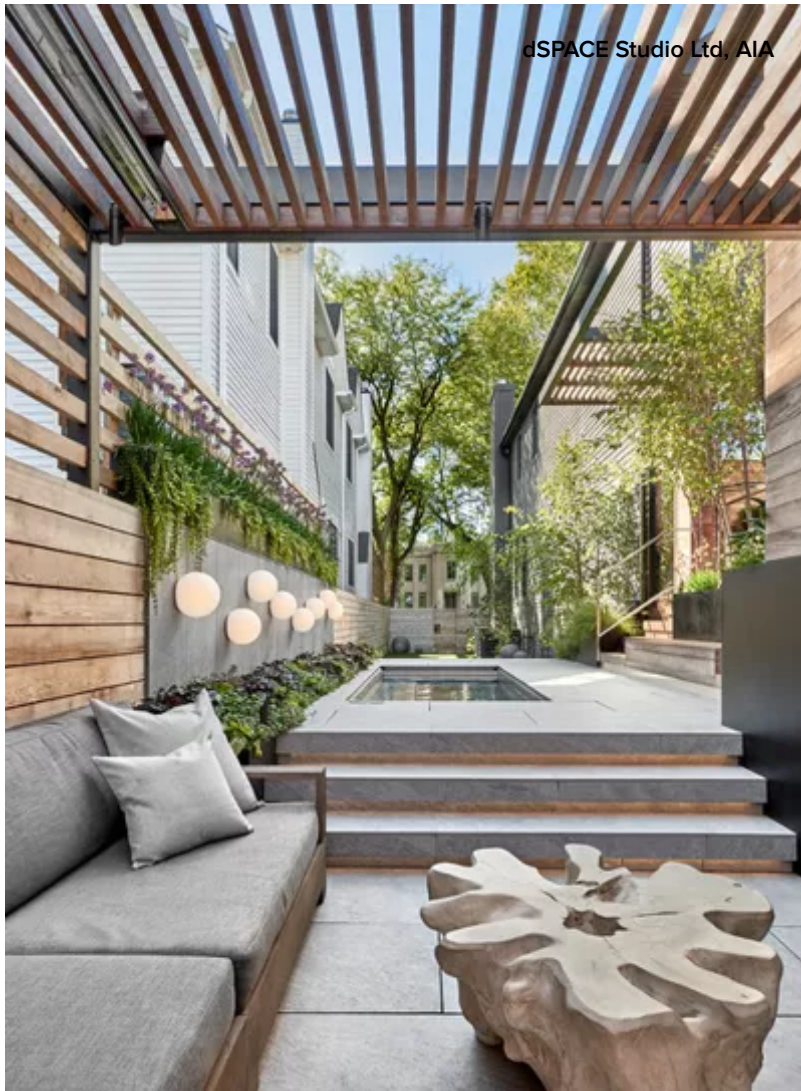
Porcelain tile: Waterfall, Quarziti 2.0 collection, Mirage; spa: Diamond Spas



UV- and water-resistant plastic globe lights run the length of the spa's wall, illuminating the terrace and providing the dining deck with an attractive, playful view. The architects used 3D modeling to design the lights' arrangement.

"Accented by plantings, this wall provides not only privacy but a vibrant backdrop for the spa," Toukoumidis says.

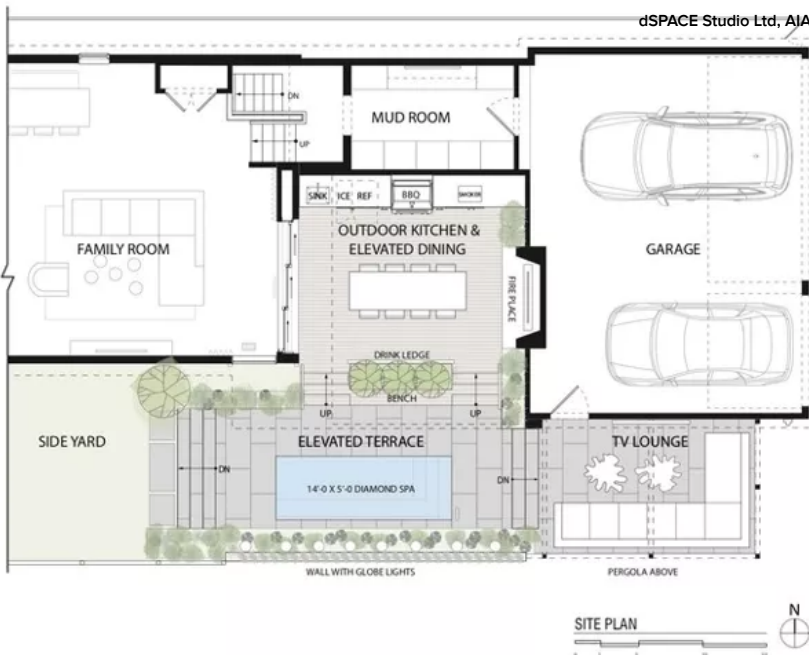
Shade-friendly plants that include purple heuchera



and 'Diane's Gold' brunnera (*Brunnera* 'Diane's Gold') grow in living roof trays next to the pavers and can be removed if needed to access spa equipment. More creeping Jenny and allium grow in planter boxes along the top of the spa wall.

TV Lounge

A covered outdoor TV lounge is a couple of steps down from the spa terrace. A pergola made from structural steel tubing painted black and two-by-four ipe louvers shades the space. Ultimately, the wood will turn gray, as will all the wood in the yard.



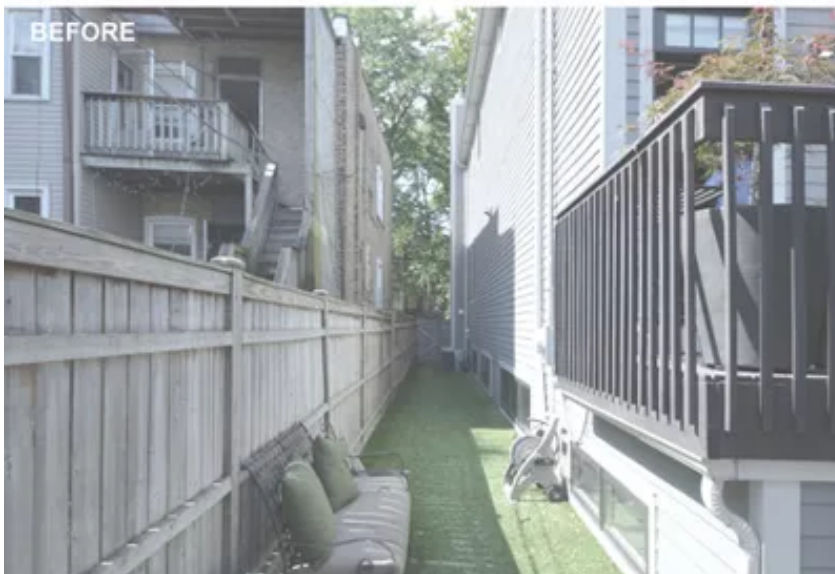
Like the spa, the TV lounge was designed for use beyond the warm months. Acrylic panels top the pergola and protect the seating area from rain and wet weather. Ceiling-mounted heaters allow the homeowners to use the space later into the year.

“You can enjoy the lounge in fall and watch football when it’s chilly and turn on the heaters,” McFadden says.

The TV and the pergola are mounted on the garage, with garage access from the seating area.

Side Yard

The side yard (not photographed but shown on the site plan) is off the end of the spa terrace and offers a soft place for the kids to play. The owners opted for artificial turf, both for maintenance and because the side yard was likely too shady to grow real grass. “The client desired low maintenance,” Toukoumidis says. “We specified a product that has a realistic look.”



Before: The house sat on a 33-foot-wide lot, leaving the side yard 6 feet wide. Before hiring dSpace Studio, the homeowners purchased the property next door, adding 10 feet to their side yard, for a yard that is now 16 feet wide at its narrowest point. (They sold the property, now 10 feet narrower, to a new owner who rebuilt the home farther away from the property line.)

General contractor:
Goldberg General Contracting
Landscape installer:
Topiarius