

OPEN-AIR ROOMS ARE A LIFESTYLE TREND THAT DEFINE VERO BEACH

THE FIRST ❁ THE ONLY

Vero Beach Magazine®

The Appeal of
**OUTDOOR
LIVING**



THE APPEAL OF *Outdoor Living*

OPEN-AIR ROOMS ARE A LIFESTYLE
TREND THAT DEFINE VERO BEACH

WRITTEN BY ANN TAYLOR

In temperate climates like Vero Beach, it seems as though outdoor rooms have been around forever, providing a popular place to relax, entertain or simply take time out from the demands of daily life. It's no wonder, then - thanks to advances in architectural design and technology - today's version of outdoor living space has garnered enhanced appeal. As a result, many Vero Beach homeowners view the addition of an outdoor room as a lifestyle feature that adds value to their existing residence.

"This is more than just a passing trend," says architect Harry Howle, who has seen a rise in the number of requests for outdoor spaces. Many are the result of referrals from previous clients, whose new open-air rooms have become a popular gathering place for friends and family. Casual and inviting, they offer a seamless

extension of the home and an expression of the owners' personalities and style.

"We've become proactive in presenting the outdoor living space as a lifestyle feature because we know how important it has become. We also understand the flexibility these spaces offer the owners and how it can enhance the use of their home," Harry emphasizes. "The addition, which bridges the use of the house with the out-of-doors, blurs the definition between the two. In many cases it can almost double the interior family space."

While the majority of today's new residential designs already feature some form of an outdoor living element, homes built 20 to 30 years ago do not. "Many of the requests we've received are for additions designed to enhance an existing residence," says Harry. "Family porches weren't a trend in the 1980s when many

GREG HILLS





Architect Harry Howle's outdoor addition is a seamless extension of the home and an expression of his family's personality and lifestyle. On the cover: Howle emphasizes the importance of creating a strong relationship between interior and exterior spaces when designing an addition. This new porch appears as though it has always been there.



Viewed from the pool and patio area, an open-air room addition provides the seamless bridge between indoor and outdoor living spaces.



With an emphasis on functionality as well as visual appeal, many of today's outdoor rooms usually feature a fireplace, barbecue and kitchenette.



of the homes in John's Island, for example, were constructed. As the houses have become 'a little tired' and owners are having their kitchens and family rooms redone, they are also looking at adding on a family porch."

Harry's approach is to arrange for an initial meeting at the homeowners' residence to discuss how they view using the new space. "Clients differ in their approach. There are so many variables involved, and ideas they may not have thought of can become part of the conversation. That's why communication is so important."

Once a needs profile and wish list have been decided on and a design agreement is in place, Harry makes another site visit to make a field assessment. "We draw a plan of the existing house, the elevations, the rooms, windows and doors

- every component that would be involved with the addition. It's a springboard for our sketches."

From there Harry goes into full schematic design mode, producing three or four plans that respond to the homeowners' wants, personalities and lifestyle. "There is almost always a pool within close proximity, so the addition acts as a bridge between the indoor living space and outdoor living one. We try to make that transition in the most transparent way possible," says Harry, referring to the diagram of a recently completed addition.

"The threshold for the size of these additions has been anywhere from 350 square feet to 500 square feet, depending on the base size of the house. It has to be in scale with the interior family spaces.





There is something magical about a porch that elicits memories of lazy summer afternoons curled up on a sofa, book in hand, savoring sweet tea and fragrant breezes.

This particular porch happens to be 400 square feet and includes many of the amenities people desire today. Almost all of the additions we've done include a fireplace, which provides ambiance. With furniture grouped around it, it becomes a gathering point. It's a statement unto itself."

With an emphasis on both comfort and functionality, additional amenities typically include a built-in barbecue, kitchenette and an informal dining area. When construction is complete and furnishings are in place, the space becomes an instant magnet, enticing family and friends to come and sit a spell. There is something magical about the setting that elicits memories of lazy summer afternoons curled up on a sofa, book in hand, savoring sweet tea and fragrant breezes.

While the end result may be attractive and appealing, a great deal of planning is necessary. "The addition has to conform to the footprint of the house and the already configured living spaces," says Harry, adding, "not to mention taking into consideration total lot coverage, set-backs, allowing for the right amount of green space and building codes. The new space also has to be compatible with the architecture; the vernacular of the house.

"To create a strong relationship between the interior living area and outdoor family porch there needs to be a seamless definition of the two spaces," Harry notes. "We accomplish that with glass doors that bury themselves into the walls. They literally disappear so you can walk right through from one space into the other."

Referring again to the diagram, Harry points out the 12-foot walls and a hip-shape tongue-and-groove cypress ceiling. His finger rests on the soffit line that runs along the perimeter of the room. "This is where we house the drums for the motorized roll-down screens and hurricane shutters, which have become very important features.



GREG HILLS

Harry and Claire Howle have enjoyed their outdoor addition ever since Harry designed it 23 years ago. Prompted by the need to create more space for their young, growing family, Harry picked up a pad, made a few sketches and showed them to Claire. The space is as fresh and inviting today as it was in 1992.

The screens let you keep the house open for ventilation, and the storm-rated shutters let an owner close down the porch and walk away without having to move furniture. Everything is safe and secure. The beauty of the roll-down feature is that operating it can be controlled by a remote, a wall switch, or from an iPhone or iPad."

Harry, who has been fascinated with residential architecture since he was a boy, admits he must have been an architect in another life, as design concepts have always come easily to him. It's not unusual for him to come up with an idea well before it becomes a trend. Case in point: Harry designed his

own outdoor family room 23 years ago.

"When Claire and I bought the house, we had four young children and we knew we needed more space. One day the two of us took a good look around and talked about what it was we wanted. That evening I did some sketches on a pad like this." Grinning, Harry picks up a nearby pad and waves it. "I said, 'Claire, this is what we can achieve.' And we did. We added on a family room and the outdoor porch with a fireplace and a pool. The addition is as fresh today as it was back then. Now everybody wants one, and with today's technology you can do so much more." ☘