

BUSINESS & REAL ESTATE

Outdoor rooms: a breath of fresh air

By JOYCE CORRIGAN

Whether or not Frank Lloyd Wright actually said the oft-attributed words, “Stay close to nature. It will never fail you,” they certainly crystallize the philosophy behind his pioneering architecture, which championed a home’s intimate connection to its natural surroundings.

More than a century later, we’re just catching up with America’s most celebrated design visionary.

Ever since the pandemic shifted many of our daily rituals outdoors — sidewalk dining, Pilates in the park, religious services on the beach — we’ve also been rethinking our own properties. Whether it’s an expansive terrace with an outdoor kitchen and flat-screen TV, a “White Lotus”-worthy poolscape, or a cozy porch built for two, thoughtfully landscaped and furnished exterior spaces have become seamless extensions of the home. Open-air “rooms” are now where we relax, dine and entertain, with patio heaters stretching the alfresco season well into fall.

Greet the day on the deck

“The deck is my absolute favorite room in the house,” said Elizabeth Messinger, whose circa-1940 cottage at 189 Pound Ridge Rd. in Bedford has been home since 2003. “Not only does it vastly expand our 950-square-foot house, it’s also where I greet each day, deadheading petunias, watering tomatoes and encouraging olive saplings.”

In 2016, the family rebuilt the original deck with new wooden railings and Trex decking to keep bare feet cool and splinter-free. Messinger also replaced aging, gnarled yews with crisp boxwood hedging while gradually adding mountain laurels and colorful perennials.

“They still surprise and delight me each spring,” she said. Outdoor spaces offer infinite delights after dark, too.

“Not only do we marvel at beautiful sunsets, but on clear nights, we set up the telescope to stargaze, spy on the cosmos, and say ‘Goodnight, Moon,’” Messinger mused.

The deck proved a saving grace when the pandemic hit in 2020, providing a place for safe gatherings — especially after Messinger discovered a generously sized outdoor dining table on Bedford’s Take It Or Leave It (TIOLI) shed Facebook page. Instantly, she had seating for 16.

“The table has hosted birthday parties, countless casual



GINNEL REAL ESTATE/X MODERN ANGLES PHOTO



WITTUS FIRE BY DESIGN PHOTO



DANIEL COONEY, HOUSE OF PHOTOS

brunches, and summer suppers surrounded by fairy lights and fireflies,” she said. “The view from the deck is what I’ll miss most.”

A final farewell

After 23 years, the family is putting the house on the market.

“Soon it will host one final farewell party under the stars,” she said, “when we all gather around the portable firepit.”

Few things foster outdoor connection quite like fire. As twilight settles over the landscape, the flickering flames of a firepit naturally invite conversation, reminiscing, and marshmallow roasting, while meals prepared on the grill allow evenings to drift effortlessly from cocktails through dessert without ever stepping inside.

Not surprisingly, demand for outdoor fire features has soared since COVID. Business ignited at Pound Ridge’s Wittus: Fire by Design, the family-owned firm specializing in European-designed wood stoves, fireplaces, grills, and pizza ovens. Founded in 1978 by Danish immigrant Niels Wittus, the company has long championed a Scandinavian Modern ethos of clean lines and sustainability.

“Growing up in Denmark, we never rushed inside when it got cold — we tried to see how long we could stay out-

side,” Wittus laughed. “Sitting by the fire and cooking meals outdoors is a primal impulse — we’re all Vikings in that way. And being outside is simply better for you.”

Fresh air, natural surroundings, and the soothing sounds of birds and rustling leaves have all been shown to reduce stress and promote serenity.

Fired-up for design

Wittus has observed that today’s homeowners are increasingly design-conscious and environmentally aware, and his firm reflects those values with products designed for clean-burning efficiency, recyclable materials, and craftsmanship that not only endures but also doubles as outdoor sculpture.

Among the company’s most popular offerings is the teepee-shaped Phoenix Grill, winner of the Platinum ADEX Award for design and innovation.

“Its unique conical shape draws smoke upward and away from guests,” Wittus said, “allowing people to comfortably gather around the fire while cooking. And crafted from COR-TEN steel, the Phoenix is built to last for decades, conserving materials, energy, and resources.”

Another conversation piece is the Italian-made Foculus — an elegant ceramic fire bowl that doubles as a compact

Above, a free-form pool with rock outcroppings and plantings by Bedford Poolscares.

At far left, a teepee-shaped Phoenix Grill from Wittus is a sustainable grill option.

At left, a 1940s cottage all decked out at 189 Pound Ridge Road.

grill with a removable stainless-steel cooking surface and chestnut wood top.

“Families have fun with this because it’s small, social, and interactive, like a hibachi,” Wittus said.

Water naturally rivals fire in defining outdoor living. Few amenities capture the essence of the “staycation” like a swimming pool. Residential pool construction has surged across Westchester — in every shape and size. Bedford Poolscares, for one, has spent more than three decades creating designs that integrate seamlessly with a property’s architecture and landscape, from classic geometric pools to dramatic infinity-edge installations.

Dramatic poolscaping

Ginnel Real Estate broker Lisa Fitz recently represented a striking three-acre Modernist residence featuring a free-form Bedford Poolscares pool nestled among dramatic rock outcroppings and mature plantings, all furnished with tables, umbrellas and sleek lounge chairs.

“Certainly, pools have become one of the most requested features in buyers’ searches,” Fitz noted, “particularly among weekend and second-home purchasers. But it’s just part of the bigger picture of today’s homebuying. At every price point, it’s not just having space that’s the ultimate luxury — it’s having outdoor space.”

Area home sales for June 2026

Bedford, Lewisboro, Mount Kisco and Pound Ridge

Below is a representative sample of residential real estate transactions in June. The information shown is compiled from a publicly available database called SalesWeb, which can be accessed through the New York State Office of Real Property Tax Services.



COURTESY OF GINNEL REAL ESTATE
95 Narrows Road



COURTESY OF COMPASS GREATER NY
74 Ridgefield Ave.



COURTESY OF GINNEL REAL ESTATE
84 Hemlock Road

Sale Price	St. Address	Town	Bed/Bath	Sq. Ft.	Acres	Days to Sale
\$2 million and up						
\$6,500,000	95 Narrows Road	Bedford Hills	6/7 full, 1 half	8,942	16.62	8
\$5,772,258	24 Penwood Road	Bedford	6/8 full, 1 half	12,000	5.38	344
\$2,827,500	133 Boway Road	South Salem	6/5 full, 1 half	6,344	20.72	168
\$2,350,000	314 McLain St.	Bedford Hills	5/5 full, 1 half	4,966	6.00	37
1 million to \$1.9 million						
\$1,995,000	74 Ridgefield Ave.	South Salem	4/4 full, 1 half	5,153	3.83	26
\$1,800,000	8 Nancy’s Lane	Pound Ridge	3/3 full, 1 half	4,002	2.05	7
\$1,485,000	8 Douglas Drive	South Salem	4/3 full, 1 half	3,463	1.20	9
\$1,150,000	2 Reynolds Lane	Katonah	3/2 full, 1 half	2,000	4.01	17
\$1,137,500	126 Croton Lake Road	Katonah	4/3 full	3,052	4.00	30
Up to \$999,999						
\$745,000	84 Hemlock Road	South Salem	3/2 full	1,707	0.45	11
\$725,000	9 Cradle Rock Road East	Pound Ridge	3/2 full	1,525	3.12	7
\$605,000	104 Park Drive	Mount Kisco	2/2 full, 1 half	1,268	0.01	5

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WESTCHESTER COUNTY PUBLIC NOTICE

ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARINGS

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN, that the Zoning Board of Appeals of the Town of Lewisboro will host a Public Hearing on Wednesday, August 26, 2026, at 7:30 p.m., 79 Bouton Road, South Salem, New York, Justice Court.

CAL. NO. 18-26-BZ

Application of Vito DiMatteo, [Petkanics, Jaime, owner of record], 17 Cross Pond Rd, South Salem, NY for the following variance for the existing generator with a 15' side yard setback in a 2A zoning district whereas 40' as per Article IV Section 220-23E of the Town of Lewisboro Zoning Code required therefore requiring a 25' side yard variance.

The property is located on the east side of (#17) Cross Pond Rd, South Salem, NY designated on the Tax Map as Sheet 41, Block 10266 Lot 14, in an R-2AC, Two-Acre Residential District consisting of approximately 2.25 acres.

Additional information regarding this application may be obtained from the Secretary to the Zoning Board of Appeals, 79 Bouton Road, South Salem, New York during regular business hours. At such Hearing, all interested parties may attend and will be heard.

Dated this 22nd day of July 2026 in South Salem, New York

By:

ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS TOWN OF LEWISBORO ROBIN PRICE, JR. CHAIR

The Town of Lewisboro is committed to equal access for all citizens. Anyone needing accommodations to attend or participate in this meeting is encouraged to notify the Secretary to the Zoning Board of Appeals in advance.