



Multifamily builders have more ways than ever to maximize outdoor spaces

JOHNATHON ALLEN

Whether it's an upscale apartment complex with a poolside fire ring or the installation of a gourmet stainless steel outdoor kitchen on the rooftop of a luxury condominium tower, multifamily builders are finding new ways to utilize outdoor spaces to offer more value to buyers and renters. As the market has become more constrained, builders have been under pressure to adapt and find new ways to set their projects apart while also maximizing every square foot of available space, both indoors and out.

Luckily, there are more options than ever before for enhancing outdoor living spaces, including a wide range of different styles of BBQ grills from simple to state of the art, integrated warming drawers for holding pre-cooked food, mini-refrigerators, wet bar areas, and clean-running biofuel fireplaces.

TURN UP THE FLAME

"We've definitely seen a major shift in the design of outdoor spaces toward the use of fire elements in multifamily and community settings recently. It seems that a lot more landscape designers are drawing fire elements into their designs because there are so many more options available now. Three years ago, no more than 15% of our production was focused on outdoor fireplaces; this year it's gone up to 65%," says Jeff Stevens, president of FireRock, an Alabama-based manufacturer of outdoor fireplaces of all types.

According to Stevens, outdoor fireplaces extend "shoulder seasons" in regions like the Southeast and Southwest.

"People in those places are not as likely to enjoy a fire in the evening

between May and September because it's so warm outside, but having a fire can make it enjoyable to sit outside on fall evenings or in the early spring. Of course, there's always the pure ambience of fire, which has been an irresistibly attractive thing for people as long as humans have existed and has nothing to do with heat," says Stevens.

Because of the relative climate factor of location, Stevens explains that it makes more sense in warmer regions to install a community fireplace at the end of a patio or seating area where they take up less space when not in use and don't need to put out as much heat. While in cooler climates, where they are useful for providing warmth in the evening up to eight months of the year, it's more logical to go with a larger centralized fire ring that more people can gather around.

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MIXED-USE+MULTIFAMILY :: OUTDOOR ACCESSORIES

OUTDOOR COOKING

"The trend we're seeing at the upper end of the market has been all about taking the designer kitchens outside, in terms of high-quality cabinets, drawers and cooking areas," says Mitch Slater, president and founder of Danver, maker of the first purpose-built BBQ grill hood.

Both gas and electric options with a 32-inch deep well and maintenance-free finish ideal for multifamily settings are available for many grill products from Danver and other manufacturers, depending on what regional building codes will allow.

"The great thing about using stainless steel for cabinets and surfaces in a group-use setting is that, even though there is a little more cost associated with it up front, it is a lot easier to clean. And, because it's relatively maintenance free and durable over the long term, it is ideal for places that are exposed to harsher elements," says Slater.

In addition to group-use kitchens, Danver has been installing compact,



modular outdoor kitchens and barbecue grills on the private patios of individual luxury units so

homeowners can make better use of their limited slice of the natural environment.

"Another consideration in a group-use area is minimizing mold buildup and rotting in wood and tile surfaces. European-style products like ours, which are elevated on legs, get good airflow and are easy to clean around. Which is much more important in these kinds of situations where no single party is responsible for keeping things clean," says Slater.

For residential outdoor trends, see page 21. **h**

[ABOVE] SMALL TOUCHES SUCH AS OUTDOOR FIRES ADD VALUE TO COMMON AREAS OR POOL AREAS IN MANY MULTIFAMILY PROJECTS. **[BELOW]** MANY UNITS GO BEYOND MERE GRILLS BY ADDING REFRIGERATORS, STAINLESS STEEL BURNERS, DOORS, AND EVEN AN OUTDOOR GAS LOG SET. PHOTOS COURTESY OF RH PETERSON.

NEW MULTIFAMILY OUTDOOR OPTIONS

AS PROJECT DEVELOPERS AND URBAN DWELLERS LOOK FOR NEW WAYS TO CAPITALIZE ON THE GREAT OUTDOORS, PRODUCT MANUFACTURERS HAVE RESPONDED WITH AN INCREASING ARRAY OF CREATIVE NEW OPTIONS FOR TAKING THE PARTY OUTSIDE.

WITTUS FIRE DESIGNS

Clean-burning biofuel ethanol fireplaces by Wittus Fire Designs are well suited to warmer climates where people want the ambience of a fire without as much heat output. They're also favored in high-wind locations such as rooftops and near beaches, and in high-density urban zones where smoke output is banned.

Wittus also offers, Phoenix, steel BBQ grills made of unoxidized steel that are low-maintenance and have a distinctive reddish-brown look. The Phoenix comes with adjustable 5mm stainless steel racks that are easy to clean and handle. Created by award-winning Danish architectural designer Bent Falk, it is intended to be used as both an outdoor fireplace and barbecue grill.

RH PETERSON

Innovative companies like RH Peterson are providing a full selection of state-of-the-art options for maximizing outdoor spaces that feature either electric, gas or charcoal grills, built-in refrigerators, power burners, and efficient gas fireplaces with stone and stainless steel accents.

DANVER

Danver's Integrated Cabinets and BBQ Grills combine high-quality finishes with maximum functionality for true luxury appeal and long-lasting elegance. Warming drawers allow residents to pre-cook foods and relocate them to the outdoor serving area. Compact refrigerators, wide prep areas, and smokeless grills provide a fully functional gourmet kitchen for any resident to entertain with on summer nights.

