

Thinking INSIDE THE BOX

Written by Elaine Sisko, Reynolds Landscaping Staff Writer Photos by Michael Spark

The importance of a ground level or detached garage to homeowners on LBI cannot be overstated. Besides sheltering vehicles, they provide necessary storage space for every summertime essential at the beach--from surf boards to outdoor furniture from HVAC equipment to outdoor appliances. Often overlooked in this drab, though indispensable environment, is the untapped potential for development. By thinking 'inside' the box, these cavernous spaces can be transformed into multi-functional and highly aesthetic entertainment rooms that bridge the gap between interior and exterior, day and nighttime living.





The refurbishment of garage and storage units into useable outdoor living space is most applicable for the typical, compact property lot on LBI, where strict Township zoning codes and setback regulations can make outward expansion a challenge. Forced to decide between a lounging area or a dining pad, a swimming pool or an outdoor kitchen, in many cases homeowners must pare down their 'must-have' outdoor features or be forced to function in a cramped environment. Expanding inward into a ground level garage or repurposing a detached garage, creates no addition to the footprint of impervious space on the property yet improves accessibility for expanded backyard development.

Wall and ceiling treatments, low-voltage lighting and decorative enhancements to piling

supports can transform dark, nondescript recesses into cozy living niches that encourage congregation, relaxation and entertainment. Hardwood ceiling accents and natural stone tiled walls and floors define the style and ambiance of the al fresco living environment. Marine grade roping or natural wood accents can be applied to structural pilings to enhance or conceal their appearance.

Outdoor kitchens and sitting bar counters along with outdoor furniture, dining tables and daybeds can define the function of these open-air rooms promoting congenial gatherings with family and friends. Accessory equipment including flat-screen televisions, ceiling fans, ping pong and pool tables and other gaming equipment can create an all-weather hub for both daylight and nighttime entertainment.



While al fresco conversion rooms are intended to be open to the outdoor elements, bridging interior and exterior living, secure, enclosed spaces, can be created through the incorporation of doors and screens. Double-wide French doors and automated retractable hurricane shutters built into detached garages and ground level garage conversions create a weather-proof enclosure from the outside environment during the off-season or when homeowners are away from the property for an extended period of time.

The addition of a functional, aesthetic garage conversion does not necessarily preclude functional storage space within the garage—it simply consolidates this utilitarian function into a designated section. In a detached garage, storage space can be designed into the back section of the unit—behind a false wall. Alternatively, in a ground level garage, storage space and any ductwork and utility equipment can be allotted to one half of the garage freeing up the remaining area for development.

While limited space and restrictive zoning codes can make outward development problematic, by thinking 'inside' the box to re-purpose under-utilized garage facilities, design solutions can be found to maximize functional living space without compromise to basic utilitarian requirements. Beautiful and multi-functional al fresco garage conversion spaces can provide an aesthetic, all-weather environment to maximize outdoor living from sunrise to sunset.

To learn more about garage conversion solutions that will fit aesthetically and functionally into your property and maximize outdoor living, please contact Luke Reynolds or Brian Swank at Reynolds Landscaping 609-597-6099. Alternatively, to review select garage conversion projects designed and installed by Reynolds Landscaping, we invite you to peruse the Photo Gallery of the Reynolds website at www.reynoldslandscaping.com, for ideas and inspiration. Reynolds Landscaping and Garden Shop is located at 201 East Bay Avenue in Manahawkin, NJ.