Archispeak 358 - AU - ‘Mastering Outdoor Space Design’, with Frank Cavanaugh

**Evan Troxel:** [00:00:00] And Frank, you're joining us from the beautiful city of Chicago, which Cormac and I got to visit a couple of years ago at the AIA conference.

How's Chicago right now?

**Frank Cavanaugh:** Chicago's is Unseasonably warm right now. So we're enjoying every minute of it because it's gonna change. I'm sure pretty quickly

**Evan Troxel:** You're just, yeah, you're bracing yourselves right for

**Frank Cavanaugh:** Yeah,

**Cormac Phalen:** you're like, wait, what time is it? Exactly.

**Evan Troxel:** Frank and I were talking about some cool places in Chicago and, and he mentioned, I'm just going to mention them here because I, I didn't get to go to either one of these two places that, that he mentioned. One was the Rookery. Cormac, do you know about the Rookery

**Cormac Phalen:** Yep. I do.

In fact, I had a, friend of mine come in and I basically took him around the Midwest. But of course, one of my favorite cities, I apologize to my current city Detroit, but is Chicago. And so I had to have hit the highlights of all [00:01:00] of those.

And the rookery honestly was stop number one. If you don't count the fact that we parked right next to the Monadnock building.

**Frank Cavanaugh:** yeah. Yep, which is another beautiful

**Cormac Phalen:** is another amazing one. It was number two.

**Evan Troxel:** and so he had Crown Hall as, as

**Cormac Phalen:** Crown Hall, yeah.

**Evan Troxel:** see if you're in the city

**Frank Cavanaugh:** Yes

**Cormac Phalen:** Yes.

**Evan Troxel:** and he's in Oak Park. He's been in Oak Park and he,

**Cormac Phalen:** Ugh.

**Evan Troxel:** made some confessions. I won't repeat those confessions on the podcast, but of certain things that he

**Cormac Phalen:** No, come on.

**Evan Troxel:** yet.

But but there, there's, I mean, you're in a rich place for architecture. So that's, that's pretty cool to, to

**Cormac Phalen:** Oh, absolutely, yeah. Huh?

**Frank Cavanaugh:** that right behind our office building is actually the Unity Temple So can walk

**Cormac Phalen:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Frank Cavanaugh:** in scaffolding When they renovated it, but it looked just beautiful now, so [00:02:00] Yeah,

**Evan Troxel:** 10 years right now.

**Frank Cavanaugh:** yes

**Cormac Phalen:** or, or, or them to come because Taliesin is hurting for some love.

**Frank Cavanaugh:** hmm. Leaking and unsettling and cracking.

**Cormac Phalen:** When I was there, it was the first time I'd ever been there, , was just over the summer and it was rainy outside and it was rainy inside. And I kept pointing over, it was like is anybody going to grab a bucket for that over there? You're like, you know, yeah, yeah. And I know Frank is, was short and all, but like his bedroom, when I could stand up, right.

And, my head was in to the ceiling, like,

**Frank Cavanaugh:** yeah

**Cormac Phalen:** come on, but it was honestly, it was because of settling. So you're right.

**Evan Troxel:** Well, that is not what we're here to talk about today. So we're here to talk about.

**Cormac Phalen:** Oh [00:03:00] man. Right, right, right.

**Evan Troxel:** this amazing resource that we're going to make available to all of our listeners about kind of this framework of everything that you should, as an architect, consider when you're designing outdoor spaces.

And we're going to go through some major sections and hit the highlights, but we're going to provide Frank's more detailed list on, in the show notes for this episode. So we're going to start like architects do kind of the 30, 000 foot level and just talk about context and location. So talk about how the surrounding environment can impact outdoor space design and, and maybe some of the key factors that you begin with when you're doing those kinds of considerations early on in the project.

**Frank Cavanaugh:** Well, usually the first thing that we look at and it's usually covered by our client because they they they wouldn't even commission us to Do anything unless they did some background work is understanding the ordinances [00:04:00] local ordinances where they're allowed where they're not allowed What are the conditions? I hope. critical in the planning of it. and also understanding what the health department, is looking for when you do spaces like that outdoors. Those are kind of two critical things from a from a municipal or governmental standpoint. And then obviously it's just understanding what it is and what is their surrounding traffic.

Is there light conditions that have to be taken care of? You know, during COVID parklets were really popular restaurants that just had sidewalk space. We're allowed to use the sidewalk space for outdoor dining. But at the same time, they also did bring in big jersey barriers to protect from traffic on the streets.

So, I think those are some, two pretty critical elements. And then, since we're talking about outdoor spaces, if we're talking about roof decks, one of the main critical conditions is understanding you have an area on the roof to do it, what are [00:05:00] the, what's the context there? There RTUs up on the, up there that are making sounds, exhaust, things like that.

**Evan Troxel:** Mm

**Frank Cavanaugh:** Certainly those are nothing that you want to be setting restaurant guests next to, so you have to kind of Take care what those, what those things are. And then everything else is, typical architectural and planning analysis. Looking at site easements. You know, what's on building setbacks.

If you're going to do some type of hard roof over an outdoor space. Can you, are you into setbacks? Where the underground sewers and, and things that. Typically, as you guys know, you have to kind of consider all that context before you start building anything, so. Because sometimes these buildings or these, these outdoor spaces aren't just patios with umbrellas.

They're becoming a lot more complex.

**Evan Troxel:** I don't know the right time to ask this question, but I'm going to throw it in here real quick before we move on from the next section. And that's like, [00:06:00] when come to you guys and they, you start to go through kind of some of these items, what's the general response to that? If they already done it before, they kind of know the drill, or is it really surprising to owners sometimes to see the depth at which you have to make all these considerations?

What, what's the kind of, what do you hear from them?

**Frank Cavanaugh:** I think it's, it's a little bit of both. Some of, some of the clients that we have are, are just seasoned restauranteurs that have done everything. So, they're not surprised and sometimes they'll, they'll have suggestions that we weren't even aware of. But then sometimes when we work with independents it's their first restaurant and they're just, they're in the need for more seating. Then, then it's a kind of an eye opening experience for them on, on, on what's involved.

**Cormac Phalen:** You had sort of mentioned that, a lot of your clients come to you with, they've already done a lot of the homework. They've, gone through zoning. They've, they've met with, their local authorities and things like [00:07:00] that. But How many times have you had clients come to you, especially like, as you were saying, the independents, that just have no clue of what they're getting into and really looking to you as the subject matter expert to kind of get you more, basically pick your brains and say, okay, what, what do I do?

How, how do I begin this?

**Frank Cavanaugh:** say that that's probably the case 75 percent of the time. I would say

**Cormac Phalen:** Okay.

**Frank Cavanaugh:** I mean,

**Cormac Phalen:** Yeah.

**Frank Cavanaugh:** again with the with the really seasoned clients. I mean, they're really on top of these things. But we've we've had clients that have. Wanted to build into setbacks with like, verandas and things like that and, and actually it's surprising that they've gotten some variances to do something like that, but we're there to say, Hey, you're going to have to check with the city and, and, and work with the planning department to make that happen.

So. Yes.

**Evan Troxel:** not?

**Cormac Phalen:** Yeah.

**Evan Troxel:** somewhere [00:08:00] else, so that means I can do it too, right?

**Frank Cavanaugh:** Mhm. Or like another one, can we just move that column a little bit? I mean, which I'm sure you guys have heard a lot of.

**Cormac Phalen:** Oh my gosh. Yes.

**Frank Cavanaugh:** always, we can

**Cormac Phalen:** Yeah.

**Frank Cavanaugh:** you, if you want to spend the money, so.

**Cormac Phalen:** Yeah. I had one client who said, well, we've got this big open lobby, why can't we just, move this column? It's a shame that that column's there, can't we move it? And then, unfortunately I sarcastically respond to them. Well, yeah, if you want your 15 story building to be one story.

**Frank Cavanaugh:** Exactly. Just get out of the way.

**Cormac Phalen:** Yeah,

**Evan Troxel:** a party

**Cormac Phalen:** exactly. I know, I mean, apparently I'm not being, creative enough.

**Evan Troxel:** Too practical.

**Cormac Phalen:** So, okay. So you talked about some of the site constraints and things like that. And, you being in the Midwest, me being in the Midwest and Evan now being in a place that has [00:09:00] seasons more than just sun and, Did you have rain in California?

**Evan Troxel:** today.

**Cormac Phalen:** I guess not.

**Evan Troxel:** today. It's

**Frank Cavanaugh:** Wow.

**Cormac Phalen:** Yeah, but you're now in Oregon.

**Evan Troxel:** true.

**Cormac Phalen:** But I'm just kind of curious, like, what are the, contextual cues that, you find useful when you're starting a design especially if you're looking to, maybe create these outdoor spaces that are not just a, single use outdoor space or single season, outdoor space, but something that is more of a, year round place.

**Frank Cavanaugh:** Yeah. Well, I mean certainly in, in the planning side of it, access to the kitchen and service is, is gonna be, is gonna be absolutely key. And, and, and amazingly, a lot of places in the city that have parklets or little cafes. they don't have the flexibility of having a secondary door to get into the outdoor dining space.

They have to go through the front door.

**Cormac Phalen:** Hmm.

**Frank Cavanaugh:** bringing food through the host area, through, outside the front doors, it to the guests, but you know, they make it work. They've [00:10:00] got probably 20 seats out in front of the restaurant and they, and they make it work. But we'll, we'll be, want to be very careful.

And then I think it's, it just really comes down to kind of understanding the vibe that they're looking for. If they're looking for a, a, a very open where people see that there's outdoor dining, and then we're going to look for parts, places around the building, if it's a freestanding building, to actually take advantage of that. We've had clients that want a private dining space. Outdoor space. So it's concealed.

**Cormac Phalen:** Yeah.

**Frank Cavanaugh:** and so it'll be like a hidden surprise. We just finished one down at the, in the in the River North area in Chicago that or I'm sorry, West Loop area that is kind of a secret garden is what they, they

**Cormac Phalen:** Hmm.

**Frank Cavanaugh:** it. And it turned out really quite nice. So I think it's really kind of a vibe and, and an energy thing. and it's always kind of a, it's always the cues. I think the main cues are how do we [00:11:00] relate it, this outdoor space to the brand of the restaurant itself. And the project

**Cormac Phalen:** Okay. Right.

**Frank Cavanaugh:** were a very kind of art deco, high end interior, very dark, very deco beautiful design.

It wasn't done by us, but they asked us to do this outdoor. And they wanted it to relate, but, so the, the challenge there is how do you relate an outdoor space to a very dark, moody, art deco, kind of supper club kind of thing. So, I think it's, it's marrying the brand to the outside that I think is another key consideration.

Well,

**Evan Troxel:** did you do in that kind of a context?

**Cormac Phalen:** was

**Evan Troxel:** really specific to that, that mood and that brand, but general things that you guys did that you could talk about?

**Frank Cavanaugh:** yeah, I mean, one of the things that we don't do very often is we do carpet, we do carpets out, at outdoors. outside and

**Cormac Phalen:** Hm.

**Frank Cavanaugh:** lot of lounge [00:12:00] furniture. They really went to the nth degree about making it the most comfortable outdoor patio space in the city. And I think they succeeded because it is just, it's just like a room out there.

So, and it's covered or yeah, actually 95 percent of it is covered with a structure, but it's also the structure, the ceiling structure we did an acrylic roof structure. So let's diffuse natural light in. So,

**Cormac Phalen:** Hm.

**Frank Cavanaugh:** so yeah, I mean, it's, it feels luxurious for being outdoor space. We even use draperies on the outside.

**Cormac Phalen:** Nice.

**Frank Cavanaugh:** so, and that's one of those, those kind of spaces, because it has a hard roof, we can use these shade systems and we use heaters to kind of close it down in the wintertime. which, I'm sure we can get into a little bit on the MEP side. Unfortunately in that space we used gas heaters, which we'd like to shy away from and certainly prefer to use the

**Cormac Phalen:** Right.

**Frank Cavanaugh:** heaters.

They're [00:13:00] aesthetically much more beautiful and they're

**Cormac Phalen:** Right.

**Frank Cavanaugh:** not, the hazard that running gas pipes all around is.

**Cormac Phalen:** Yeah. I, we've, we've used things like that in the past and, and I'll, echo your sentiments because one of the things that, we've always had the challenge with is, okay, you're using the gas heaters. People are, it's the smell, it's, just the sound, it's things like that, that sort of somewhat detracts from the, the ambience that you're trying to create for these high end spaces.

**Frank Cavanaugh:** And if you're going to close it down with some vinyl shades to temper the climate,

**Cormac Phalen:** Yeah.

**Frank Cavanaugh:** you have to be thinking about air exchanges fresh ventilation CO2 detection, all of that type of stuff that's are hazards that you really have to be concerned about. And, and the other thing, and I know we'll maybe talk on MEP, but the other thing to be concerned about is condensation when you, when you have a. Vinyl, Side to your outdoor space. There's a good chance that if you don't have good air [00:14:00] circulation, that it's going to condensate when the dew point is just right. We had that

**Cormac Phalen:** Right.

**Frank Cavanaugh:** opening up this and we had to increase the ventilation to make it work. So,

**Cormac Phalen:** Yeah, cause that, Evan goes back to that, schizophrenic climate of the Midwest, especially places like Chicago that, you have sun during the day, you have wind and stuff, and then you have, rain, snow, all of that stuff all at the same time, which you're now getting to experience more of.

No.

**Evan Troxel:** it was at this new outdoor eating area that there's kind of a, Think of it as food trucks, but without the food trucks. It's, it's like these booths almost of food service around a central eating area and it's outdoor, it's covered, but it's open air. And I thought it was really great because opened in the summertime and nobody sat under that covering in the [00:15:00] summertime. Everybody was out on the lawn in kind of chairs and kind of what I would call open seating maybe. and now we're getting to fall weather, right? And. There's these really cool kind of stool height bars everywhere with tabletop fire, they're not like fire rings, they're these fire troughs, so

**Frank Cavanaugh:** Mm

**Evan Troxel:** heat

**Cormac Phalen:** Yeah.

**Evan Troxel:** heaters and some ceiling fans.

So it's still open air, there's no walls on this structure, but it was totally comfortable, and you still feel like you're outside because you can see the views in the distance, you can feel the air moving through, so plenty of ventilation. I do wonder when, when the weather gets really cold. What they're going to do, because there's no option for roll down doors.

Maybe they'll do the vinyl doors, like you're talking about, Frank, you

**Frank Cavanaugh:** hmm

**Evan Troxel:** it's like the sighting comes down and

**Cormac Phalen:** Yeah.

**Evan Troxel:** of holds the heat in, keeps the weather out, but you still feel kind of like you're outdoors.

**Frank Cavanaugh:** [00:16:00] Right

**Evan Troxel:** curious from like a programming standpoint, like what are the other considerations you need to make early on in planning?

Because there's so many different kinds of things you can do in these outdoor environments. I guess we're, we're kind of talking about. food service stuff right now, but there's other kinds of activities that could go on in these as well. But you know, like I just mentioned, loose furniture versus fixed furniture.

Like what are the kinds of things that you're really talking to your client about when it comes to programming and planning early before you even really begin design?

**Frank Cavanaugh:** Well, actually that's a that's a good thing to bring up furniture types because it varies depending on the concept We've we're doing stuff right now out in in in Massachusetts where they they love booths so they want booths outside And so we built a like a long veranda where there's booths and banquettes that are stationary that are there all year All

**Cormac Phalen:** Hm.

**Frank Cavanaugh:** With very little flexible seating undercover, but there's going to be a future outdoor patio next to it that they want to have [00:17:00] some flexible seating because flexible seating is, is key in restaurant design to be able to change,

**Cormac Phalen:** Yeah. Mm

**Frank Cavanaugh:** Guests table sizes. So I think it's, it runs the gamut. Furniture I think is a, is a, is a big consideration. We started talking earlier about the context. A big thing that people don't think about, that clients don't think about is, is headlights in cars. when

**Cormac Phalen:** hmm.

**Frank Cavanaugh:** to some type of traffic or a parking lot, if it's a suburban pad site location, you don't want to have your guests be Periodically blinded by headlights that are turning the corner or coming down a row of parking.

**Evan Troxel:** funny. I'm like smiling so bad at this huge green because I'm like, the guy who drives by and like turns my headlights

**Frank Cavanaugh:** Tur Heh.

**Evan Troxel:** so that I don't blind the people sitting there because whoever designed the thing didn't think about that

**Frank Cavanaugh:** Yeah.

**Evan Troxel:** get it

**Cormac Phalen:** Yeah.

**Evan Troxel:** I,

**Frank Cavanaugh:** You're

**Evan Troxel:** like, I'm trying to do them a favor.

So they have a nice experience, but nobody else does that.

**Frank Cavanaugh:** Nobody. You're one in a million, [00:18:00] Evan, for sure. For sure. Because it's

**Cormac Phalen:** Yeah.

**Frank Cavanaugh:** it's, it's, yeah, it's, it's, it could be an issue. So we'll, we'll think strategically about that. Should we do some screen walls? Should there be a lattice work of, of plant material to help, to help block some of that? That's, one of the big

**Cormac Phalen:** Yeah.

**Frank Cavanaugh:** that we're concerned about.

**Cormac Phalen:** So, so let me ask this and, yes, I'm falling down this rabbit hole right now, but, I'm, I'm thinking about you being in Chicago and, doing things downtown where, you want this kind of sidewalks, cafe type environment. And there are a lot of different considerations that you have to take into play when, it's essentially right next to the big mass, traffic of people who are flowing back and forth.

And they're either, in outdoor dining or there's, passersby that are tourists or, going to work and things like that. So what, what kind of considerations do you take into consideration when you're, creating spaces like that?

**Frank Cavanaugh:** if it's in an urban environment on a city street where you might have, [00:19:00] like, maybe a 12 foot wide sidewalk, or, or maybe a little bit wider, 15 to 18 foot deep sidewalk, mean,

**Cormac Phalen:** Mm hmm.

**Frank Cavanaugh:** public way open, so the city is going to, some, the city is going to have some kind of criteria that you have to maintain, like, 12 or five feet, six feet of sidewalk space if you're going in their sidewalk.

**Cormac Phalen:** Mm

**Frank Cavanaugh:** then, if it's an outdoor cafe, it's it. Try to get some type of planting on your cafe railing 'cause you're gonna need a cafe railing if you're serving

**Cormac Phalen:** hmm. Right.

**Frank Cavanaugh:** And it provides a little bit of a buffer. From, from pedestrian traffic. But, some, and the city, I mean, that's what everybody's used to, right?

Everybody wants to,

**Cormac Phalen:** Right. Right.

**Frank Cavanaugh:** to, see and, see and be seen in those kind of environments. It's, it's a

**Cormac Phalen:** Exactly, yeah.

**Frank Cavanaugh:** where, if we're doing a ground up building, restaurant building, or Any, any type of hospitality building, we'll, we'll ask, we'll, we'll try to fit in a planting strip of three, four, five [00:20:00] feet wide so that we can actually get some planting and provide that buffer if there's pedestrian traffic that we'd like

**Cormac Phalen:** Right.

**Frank Cavanaugh:** distance ourselves from a little bit.

But still, it's, it's kind of what it's all about in, in, in these city locations is, is being, being seen and, and, and get the vibe of the street life.

**Cormac Phalen:** You know, it's interesting, and this is a complete aside, so bear with me here. But, the last time I was in Chicago I was walking around in, not too far from your office. And there's, great, row of shops and restaurants and things like that. And we went to this one Greek restaurant.

And the way that the. sidewalk seating. And I know that we're, falling down the rabbit hole of sidewalk seating and things like that. But, this, this seating was actually, it was, storefront, sidewalk, and seating was closer to the road. And so you kind of passed between the sidewalks and stuff.

And it was [00:21:00] just really kind of interesting because really the, the, you were sort of interacting, whereas like, downtown, you're walking past it, it's closer to the buildings and stuff. And this one, you're sort of, you're passing through the whole environment, the eating experience and everything else.

And it's, you're kind of. Part of the whole thing. So it was, it was just really interesting.

**Evan Troxel:** Cormac, because this is, I wanted to ask about. There's so many different kinds, I would imagine, right? Based on where front of house, where back of house, where indoor, where outdoor. there a bar? you go through? Somewhere to get somewhere else? Like, like you're saying, does the public get to walk right through the middle of it?

Is it, is it,

**Cormac Phalen:** Right.

**Evan Troxel:** you seat yourself? Is it they seat you? Like, there's so many considerations. And

**Cormac Phalen:** Yeah.

**Evan Troxel:** and then I'm sure the restaurants kind of want a little bit of flexibility too, right? And so, is, is that all, those, these are all different considerations that you kind of get, got to get out on the table, as it were, up front, to,

**Frank Cavanaugh:** Exactly.[00:22:00]

**Evan Troxel:** through these during the design.

**Frank Cavanaugh:** Yeah, exactly. I mean, we find most times the restaurant, our clients want to have people come into the lobby and greet a host and then be able to either go into the restaurant or the bar or go out to the outdoor dining area, preferably within the same space. Very rarely do we actually see them having a separate outdoor entrance, but sometimes they do if it's large enough.

Yeah. If it's a large enough outdoor space and they have the the labor as far as their staff is concerned, they'll put a second host outside to bring, bring in traffic directly from outside and not, not, not kind of up the the circulation inside the restaurant. So it all depends.

**Evan Troxel:** One more thing here because you mentioned that you're doing a lot of kind of adaptive reuse. You've got a lot of old building shells that maybe you're putting a new program into or maybe you're renovating or whatever. And I can imagine with the old building stock that you're working in in [00:23:00] Massachusetts, for example, ADA is a huge upgrade for a lot of these places.

So the design phase, the early, planning phases, even before we get to design, like that's just a given, right? You're, we're, we're talking about ADA accessibility for everything. That's throughout the entire building, right? It's not

**Frank Cavanaugh:** Yes.

**Evan Troxel:** part, but it's, it's the restrooms, it's the kitchen, it's the bar, it's, it's all of these things.

**Frank Cavanaugh:** Yes, definitely. ADA is a prime consideration, especially with old buildings, and especially in restaurants that, one of the restaurants we're working on in New Bedford right now, has restrooms, and they're sized, they have the right amount of fixtures for the current occupancy. when you add then an outdoor space

**Evan Troxel:** Hmm.

**Frank Cavanaugh:** You have to come up with some additional restrooms. So, in this particular case, we're actually doing ADA accessible restrooms outside that in the winter can be winterized, shut [00:24:00] down when the, when the patio's not open. But yeah, that's a prime concern because, And, and as far as access, change in grades, things like that all have to be taken into account because you certainly don't want to have a special needs person have to go around the back of the restaurant or go through the service entry to access a

**Cormac Phalen:** Right, right.

**Frank Cavanaugh:** them the same

**Cormac Phalen:** Yeah.

**Frank Cavanaugh:** as everybody else, so.

**Cormac Phalen:** I don't, we, I just had this conversation with somebody that. Was saying that the outdoor, once you create this outdoor patio or this outdoor space that is supporting the, restaurant cafe or something like that, that you don't really need to consider the that space as part of the usable space for occupancy.

And I was contending, but yes, you do. And I'm now going to send this episode over to him and say, Hey, let's have this conversation again.

**Frank Cavanaugh:** interesting,

**Cormac Phalen:** Mm

**Frank Cavanaugh:** ago

**Cormac Phalen:** [00:25:00] hmm.

**Frank Cavanaugh:** some municipalities didn't catch on that that should be an issue.

**Cormac Phalen:** Right.

**Frank Cavanaugh:** wasn't a problem. But I cannot think in the last 10 years any jurisdiction that we've been in where they say, Oh, it doesn't matter how

**Cormac Phalen:** Right.

**Frank Cavanaugh:** seats you add. You have to provide, you have to provide the right ratio.

**Cormac Phalen:** Right. Exactly. Yeah. So let me ask you a little bit more since we've sort of, talking about, the infrastructure, of adding extra bathrooms and stuff. What are some of the other considerations infrastructure wise that you need to consider when you're, doing that kind of support of, outdoor design?

Right. Right. Right. Yeah.

**Frank Cavanaugh:** bringing out a food, a product to your guests that is is warm, still hot, right out of the kitchen kind of thing. But that servers don't have an undue kind of obstacle course to get to [00:26:00] the, the guests that's sitting outside.

So you can. it so that you have almost direct. And if we're doing a ground up building, we'll, we'll want to have direct access to the patio from the kitchen. but then, then also having to make sure they have the proper amount of service stations outside to, to, to service busing of tables to get dishes if they're, if they're, if they're doing plates and silverware to get dishes out and back into the dishwasher in the kitchen. that's, that's going to be, consideration from a context standpoint. and I think the other, the other other thing that comes to mind is prevailing winds and sun direction. If you have a west facing, Place, and this is like with any building, obviously you'd want to have some shade, shade devices if possible.

If you're doing a hard cover or a veranda type of structure to make sure that that's not going to be an issue because that's like prime restaurant time is, is, as the sun's setting. And [00:27:00] people aren't going to want to sit there if they're, if they're blinded by the sun. So, and then prevailing winds, I think, is, is the other thing, depending on where you're at what is the wind conditions going to be like on any given day. To where that might be a problem. And then definitely, we, we almost, we will never like do a pendant light hanging on a chain and the outdoors because it's just going to swing back and forth constantly. So it's gotta be like a rigid, rigid stem light fixture that we're very confident and it's not going to move when, when, when they get like a 20 mile an hour gust or something like that.

**Evan Troxel:** seems to me like these outdoor spaces too, like you don't want it to feel like an afterthought, right? Like a lot of times that they, they might feel like they're kind of tacked on. And I think there's a lesser priority on some of these spaces, depending on the owner, because they don't use it all year round, for example, or whatever.

But I'm curious from like a budgeting standpoint, but also from an infrastructure MEP. structural standpoint, it seems to me like [00:28:00] Like these spaces don't cost that much less than interior spaces. You still have to do a lot of design work to get these to be really special places. Outside, you've got to have heat, you've got to have wind protection, you've got to think about the acoustics, you've got, you've still got to design and pay for all of this stuff. But, but they also get to use it a lot more. by

**Frank Cavanaugh:** Right.

**Evan Troxel:** I'm curious like what, what your experience is with, with all that kind of stuff.

**Frank Cavanaugh:** Yeah. I mean, that, that, that spot on all those things are, are, are going to be considerations. And actually from a sound standpoint, we actually sometimes have more concerns about the sound that the, the outdoor space is generating

**Evan Troxel:** Yeah.

**Frank Cavanaugh:** versus receiving because of neighbors. If you're in an urban environment you don't want angry neighbors.

And so that's gotta be a key consideration from a sound standpoint. As well. So, I mean, temperature, climate control, like, like you said, Evan, it, it all depends on how often you, and how, much during the year you [00:29:00] want to use it. If you have a nice winter in Chicago, it's possible, we can have clients that can use it almost year round.

It's, it's rare though. And what we'll do to seasonalize it is, and we're doing a lot more of this now, is using, like I mentioned, these shade systems on tracks. And then we can do like double shade systems, where you can not only have a vinyl that'll come down to do the, Temperature break and the wind break, but then you can have an additional shade behind it to help with the sun and light control. So that's, that's I think an another thing. But like you said, now, now you're building a hard roof. You've got some motorized shades you've got an electric heating system. Yeah, it, it, it adds up. It, it, it, it doesn't, it's not cheap if you do it, like, if you want something year round or almost three seasons.

**Cormac Phalen:** So let me ask you, you said where you're starting to talk about kind of like some of these physical elements within the outdoor space that are more, there, sometimes people just think, Oh, outdoor [00:30:00] space, we have a nice little flat, flat patio. We're going to get ourselves, an umbrella and some chairs and stuff, and we're going to call it done.

But you're talking about. Like, real, a room you're creating a space, you're creating this place. And so, sometimes like, what are the considerations like, for, budgetary concerns, and I think Evan kind of alluded to like, this kind of, the structural concerns and things like that.

I mean, do clients, when they're thinking about those spaces, how do they factor some of that in? Because they may be thinking, preconceived notion of one thing and, when you show them, Oh, and that's this and they're like, Oh, well, what's the budget? Like, right.

**Frank Cavanaugh:** a, either a, a company that does budgets or work with a GC kind of on a, on a maximum upset budget.

kind of, negotiated type contract to help with that. But yeah, I mean, the big thing structurally that's a concern is if you do roof decks, obviously you're, you're putting in a live load on a roof with a deck, [00:31:00] the weight of a deck all that type of stuff that has to be understood first. So one of the first things we'll do is we'll bring in the structural engineer and have him help us with the feasibility of such a project.

If it's a roof deck, if it's a If it's an on grade structure, like a veranda structure, then it, it's really a little bit more straight forward, but with utilities running around outside, you have to be careful of where your foundations are. You might have a, you might have an 8 by 8 post that's holding up part of your veranda, but the footing is going to be like probably 4 feet by 4 feet, and how close is it to the main municipal gas line, and the sewer line, and all that kind of stuff.

So, structurally, those are the, it's more underground that are concerns in that case.

**Cormac Phalen:** Yeah.

**Evan Troxel:** to ask you about product durability and performance because you're exposing this stuff to the elements a lot more potentially, but also I want to combine that with aesthetics because the way you're talking about shades, talking about motorized shades, we're talking about electric heaters, we're talking about all [00:32:00] kinds of things that, that to me now

**Cormac Phalen:** Right. Right. Mm hmm. Mm

**Evan Troxel:** integrated into a soffit. They're integrated into a veranda. We've got technology controlling multiple things. And, and I feel like performance and durability and aesthetics are kind of all coming together. coming together in a really interesting way. Whereas before, they would roll a heater out, right.

And they would bolt up a fan and they would, zip tie some shades up. Right. Like that's how it used to be when, when it was just like, let's make an outdoor space. And now it's like, it's outdoor architecture. It's, it's this, it is a

**Cormac Phalen:** hmm.

**Evan Troxel:** spatial thing. And people are concerned about how these look. but also how they perform over an extended period of time. Like take, take us kind of through some of that side of it because performance, I can imagine from an owner's point of view, like this stuff needs to last. And

**Frank Cavanaugh:** Yeah.

**Evan Troxel:** time, you, people want to feel like they're in a [00:33:00] really nice environment and things aren't just tacked on and bolted on.

**Frank Cavanaugh:** Yeah, for sure. Yeah, definitely. You mentioned recess, recessing things. I mean, the heating systems right now that there are electric heat. Systems out there that, that you can recess in a soffit that it looked very clean on in there for outdoor spaces. I think, your selection of fabrics, obviously you want some fabrics that are, are, are, are made for outdoor use. If they're going to get sun and they,

**Cormac Phalen:** Mm hmm.

**Frank Cavanaugh:** Hold up, hold up well. A lot of it, I mean, obviously you're not going to do case work outside that is going to be exposed to rain and warping and, and, and things like that, that you wouldn't have an issue with on the inside.

But there's a number of different things that you can do with sealers using lumber, two by, two by materials. that are solid, that you could get a nice seal on, that can be used outside. And they'll eventually get some wear. But they'll last [00:34:00] a lot longer than thinking that you can just pull in like an indoor chair, like furniture for example.

I mean, definitely. You're going to be needing some outdoor furniture. But no matter how many times that you think about all the things, the durability of furniture and fixtures, there's always a surprise. And we actually had one a few

**Cormac Phalen:** Mm

**Frank Cavanaugh:** ago in Denver. It was amazing. We had this, we had these tables that we had out in their outdoor cafe. and they were a composite wood material, very durable. It was an outdoor table. We've used it before, never had any problems. Clients loved it. Well, what was happening with this client, and I don't know if it had to do with the altitude in Denver or what, but they were

**Cormac Phalen:** hmm. Hm.

**Frank Cavanaugh:** when they put their wine glass on the surface, they were noticing that after a while, they'd move the glass, and there was like a little melted circle on the composite wood of the glass. [00:35:00] And, and

**Cormac Phalen:** Interesting.

**Frank Cavanaugh:** what we thought, what we kind of figured out was happening was the sun was doing like the magnifying glass phenomena,

**Cormac Phalen:** Really.

**Frank Cavanaugh:** this hot little beam of light down the stem on the, on the actual stand of the glass and, and to melt the wood.

**Evan Troxel:** Whoa.

**Cormac Phalen:** That's

**Frank Cavanaugh:** so they had to go

**Cormac Phalen:** crazy.

**Frank Cavanaugh:** and they, so the problem was solved, but it was like, who would have ever thought of that?

**Evan Troxel:** saw

**Cormac Phalen:** Ex all, yeah, all the factors that you, you go through to, you know, try to make these outdoor durable spaces and you, you, you fall to, you fall victim to a, a piece of stemware.

**Frank Cavanaugh:** exactly,

**Cormac Phalen:** That's awesome.

**Frank Cavanaugh:** And the

**Cormac Phalen:** That's crazy.

**Frank Cavanaugh:** Was the problem. And from what I understand, once they made the glassware change problem solved. So.

**Evan Troxel:** What, what, what do your clients do when they don't have a four season set up with all of the stuff that they have out there? [00:36:00] Like, do they have to provide offsite storage or, mean, I can't imagine it looks good to just leave it out and say, you can't sit there kind of a thing, right? So it's

**Cormac Phalen:** right,

**Evan Troxel:** to, you have to think through kind of operationally, but then like aesthetically as well when you're, when you're planning this stuff in advance.

**Frank Cavanaugh:** actually a really good point. I mean, most cases, a fairly large project it, it doesn't become in the way. They'll keep it out year round. They will have some off site storage. Sometimes when we do ground up buildings with outdoor spaces, we'll provide them space for storage.

But obviously space is expensive to build, so they might find it more

**Cormac Phalen:** right,

**Frank Cavanaugh:** to bring it off site. The other thing that's related to that, Evan, is, is the positioning of it. When we do freestanding hospitality spaces, we try not to have the, you go through a front or outdoor space to get [00:37:00] into the restaurant.

**Evan Troxel:** Mm hmm.

**Frank Cavanaugh:** Because, the bad weather, you're going through kind of an empty space. And if they take their furniture offsite if it's, if it's onsite, then you're going through a space with 20 tables that are empty and snow on them to get into the restaurant. So you want to position it if you can, in a way that that's not a problem. But yeah, offsite storage is certainly something we see a lot. Yeah,

**Evan Troxel:** didn't see that coming kind of an expense, something on a line item on the expense sheet, right? It's like,

**Cormac Phalen:** right.

**Evan Troxel:** this stuff because we don't want to set the expectation that you can sit there or that you, like you said, you don't want people walking through a space of,

**Frank Cavanaugh:** that's empty.

**Evan Troxel:** tables covered in snow.

**Cormac Phalen:** So is that a conversation that you have with them during the planning process? Because if you say, Hey, we're, we're only able to, create a three season space for you, but you have to consider that fourth season and what you do with [00:38:00] those spaces,

**Evan Troxel:** those furnishings,

**Cormac Phalen:** you know?

**Frank Cavanaugh:** I was just gonna just expand on that a little bit. You know, you talked about different types of operations. I think other component that we see becoming more popular with outdoor space is putting bars out there. And even seen instances where. They want to do cooking outside. And that's where For one, from an MEP standpoint, obviously plumbing, drains, things like that for bars, you need that, that, that's going to be some, there's going to be some costs there to do that, because you need water, you need floor drains, and so forth. but I think the other aspect is the health department issues. You know, with restaurants, you obviously, if you're preparing food, or you have food open, In a service kind of environment you need to have cleanable surfaces around, especially the ceiling. we actually did a project at the Star for, down in Dallas, in the Dallas Cowboys kind of world down there. [00:39:00] They actually made us do a cleanable over this outdoor grill station. we ended up doing it stainless. It was, it ended up being beautiful. It, I, from what I understand, they don't use it too much anymore out there because of the operation headache for it. But bars and outdoor cooking are, are, are something to really be careful of. And then also, if you're going to do a bar, And you're going to spend the money on all of the MEP work or the plumbing work that's necessary to build that bar. It better have more than 5 seats or else it's not going to be worth it. It should probably have at least 10, preferably 15 or 20 seats to actually make it worth the investment.

**Cormac Phalen:** Yeah, honestly, I was going to ask that question. It's like, now you're, you're Investing so much in the infrastructure of this, this outdoor kitchen or, the outdoor bars you're talking about, and I can, if you're also [00:40:00] limited to the amount of time that you can use it throughout the year, I mean, that's got to be that similar conversation that you have to have with them is like, what do you do with the space?

How do you close it down? How does it become something that you're, it's not like this eyesore during the off periods of times when you're not using, when you're trying to create this, again, this kind of like this atmosphere, this ambiance of like, not only this continuation of your interior space to your exterior space, but you know, just the, practicality of having all of that stuff in there.

That's kind of interesting.

**Frank Cavanaugh:** yeah, for sure. I mean, it's something to consider. With the outdoor bar spaces, I mean, that's, that's kind of key. And a lot of people wouldn't even think, okay, well, you have to be concerned from a health department standpoint for bars. I mean, but you forget, well, there's garnishes, right? You have cherries, you have limes, you have, even if you're not serving food out in the bar, you have cocktail garnishes that have to be in covered containers that type of thing.

So those are all little, little details that have to be thought out and made and definitely considered by the [00:41:00] operator before they, they run with that. And the health department, I mean, if we're, if we're doing our job, we, we would already have had conversations with the health department before

**Cormac Phalen:** Right.

**Frank Cavanaugh:** construction begins.

And certainly before we get too far into our design work, because we want to understand what that particular health department feels is important. They're going to have their own. Codes to follow but sometimes they're, they'll, they'll go off code and, and they have like particular concerns that they had with a restaurant down the street a year ago, that type of thing that we have to look out for.

So, if we do our homework properly, we can usually address all those things.

**Cormac Phalen:** It's interesting because so that's the, doing your, that proper homework. Is, is all part of the things that aren't seen there, the, the background, when you're trying to create this overall atmosphere outside and, what it is that you're trying to create and, so I don't know if people appreciate [00:42:00] like the work that it takes to think of all of those small things, those small details, those small design elements that really kind of contribute to the atmosphere that Otherwise, you're just there, having a nice, time out, drinking some wine and enjoying the outdoor space, but then the elements that create those spaces.

**Evan Troxel:** You don't want to know what's actually behind

**Frank Cavanaugh:** You don't want to know how the sausage

**Cormac Phalen:** Exactly.

**Frank Cavanaugh:** to eat it. Yeah.

**Cormac Phalen:** Right.

**Frank Cavanaugh:** no, that's, that's, that's, that's spot on. I mean, and if you do your job well, people shouldn't notice that stuff. I mean, it should, it

**Cormac Phalen:** Right.

**Frank Cavanaugh:** seamless. They should be focused on having a good time, enjoying some great drinks and great beverages and being served well by an attendant server and a great chef.

And that should be what they, what stands out to them. That should be the experience. Yes.

**Evan Troxel:** all architects. It's like that mask that, that exists, that

**Cormac Phalen:** [00:43:00] Yeah.

**Evan Troxel:** of magic. And this is just a magic experience that I'm having. And all of the work that, that Cormac and you have described, it's going on in the background. And, and that value not coming through as like, this is what the architect, like that. Part of the issue with our architects, not their value being misunderstood, right? It's

**Frank Cavanaugh:** Mhm.

**Evan Troxel:** it

**Frank Cavanaugh:** Yeah.

**Evan Troxel:** Right. But it's,

**Cormac Phalen:** Right.

**Evan Troxel:** great, we're, we're idealizing the situation. And it's like, there is so much that goes on behind the scenes to make this a past, this thing work that it's yeah,

**Cormac Phalen:** Yeah.

**Evan Troxel:** get better at that.

Somehow.

**Frank Cavanaugh:** Yeah. Yeah. People, I think, don't understand that to some extent, but, you know, that's, that's the life we live, right? So, you just gotta deal with it, and,

**Cormac Phalen:** Yeah.

**Frank Cavanaugh:** you know, you guys know, the reward is actually watching people use the space,

**Cormac Phalen:** Oh yeah. Yeah. I mean, I think you said it earlier. It's, it's, it's, it's not the pad on the back that you're looking for. It's how are people [00:44:00] using your space? Is, is your space successful? I mean, it's, it's those things. It's those elements. It's just like, yeah, yeah, I did a good job. So you can do your own little pad on the back because

**Frank Cavanaugh:** Exactly.

**Cormac Phalen:** yeah.

**Evan Troxel:** You've talked about kind of this experience and ambiance and brand and maybe we can wrap this up just kind of talking about that, like the feeling people have and like what are the elements that go into the feeling that people have in the space and how it's tied back to the brand and how it's, it's tied into all of these, they're at some level, they're kind of psychological experiential, but this is really kind of what ultimately you want to play out the experience that you want people to have in these spaces.

Can you talk about the elements that you guys are really thinking about to go into that?

**Frank Cavanaugh:** Yeah, well I think one of the main, one of the very important things we haven't covered from a MEP standpoint is lighting. You know, we talked a little bit about context, where you want to make sure that if there's a street light screaming, [00:45:00] 110 foot candles of, of light, you want to figure out how to deal with that. So lighting is, is,

**Cormac Phalen:** Right. Right.

**Frank Cavanaugh:** I mean, some, some concepts are high energy of vibe with a little bit louder music. That's one space. Then there's other concepts that are, are just a little bit sexier, a little bit more intimate. Then you want to do softer music, you want to do dimmable lighting to, to change with the, with the time of day. Those are the types of things that I think you want to look at. And then it's really surfaces and furniture. I mean, what kind of surfaces, what, what textures and surfaces are you going to be looking at that marry well with the interior vibe, the brand that they're doing?

Are they doing rough sawn rustic wood on the insides? Is that the kind of place? Well, then it's okay to do that outside, but if they're looking at if they have like sleek finishes and, And things on the inside, you have to approach it differently for the outside [00:46:00] space. Metals, what metals are you using? Is brass like a, a key brand element for the inside? Well, how can we use brass on the outside in a creative way? Obviously, in a, in a restrictive way, if the, if there's a budget concern, but but, finishes, I think that's important. and, and fabrics, there's so many different things, as you guys know, there's so many different.

products out there that, that just by their characteristics, whether it's their pattern or their color they, you can find a tie in to something that's happening inside. So I think lighting and color and fix, and finish and texture, I think are, are, are important things. As well as paving we're not, we're not, we're not pouring concrete slabs for patios too much anymore.

We're using permeable pavers, or we're doing pavers that are

**Cormac Phalen:** Mm

**Frank Cavanaugh:** properly to landscape areas. So you don't have water issues, that type of thing. we're being much more conscious, especially in mixed use projects, of, of thinking about how [00:47:00] water is processed through the site. and understanding, okay, if you have a roof you're going to have to drain that roof somewhere. Is it going to go

**Cormac Phalen:** hmm,

**Frank Cavanaugh:** municipal sewer system? Or is it going to have to be splashed out on grades somewhere? is that happening? But you can do it nicely with, with a nice paver versus pouring a, a big slab of concrete and maybe throwing some integral color. Now, we've done that before, but. It's not, it, it, it's definitely moving away. I think with, with a lot of the environmental concerns that we're seeing that's changing. And we're, we're starting to be smarter about the type of paving and, and how things are being drained and things like that on the site.

**Cormac Phalen:** mm hmm,

**Frank Cavanaugh:** that can add to the ambience, for sure.

**Evan Troxel:** I think about like water elements and fire elements and texture and light like you talked about and like the color temperature of the light and there's so many layers to successful design and I personally love it when it's tied into all of the different places that you experience in a hospitality [00:48:00] setting, like all the way back to the bathroom. Right? It's like, what are the dividers between the urinals? What are, what's the sink hardware and how does it work with what's going on in the restaurant? And then the outdoor seating area, when there's like that level of thought that kind of goes into tying all of this together to really make it on brand, right?

Like, that's where you're kind of going back to this, right? This layer of stuff that just, it's like in the Big Lebowski, that rug really ties the room together, right? It's like, it's like the, it's just this

**Cormac Phalen:** mm hmm.

**Evan Troxel:** some of it's ambient, some of it's hardware, some of it's seating, some of it's, environmental, some of it's acoustics, but all of that is working together in concert to create a great. for people. And, and to me, I, I, that, that's what, and maybe it's just because I'm an architect, right. But it's like, I appreciate that so much when you can see the level of thoughtfulness that kind of ties all of this stuff together.

**Cormac Phalen:** Right.

**Frank Cavanaugh:** the details. I mean, it was in a hotel in in [00:49:00] Milwaukee about a year and a half ago that we'd go to on a regular basis, and even the coat hangers in the rooms are these kind of cast iron that actually pick up

**Cormac Phalen:** Hmpf!

**Frank Cavanaugh:** of their logo. It's just little details like that, that even non architects have a chance, when they see it, it's like, Oh, that's cool.

I mean,

**Evan Troxel:** is awesome.

**Frank Cavanaugh:** it is, it's about tying the experience in and it's about making that progression of spaces. As you come in the front

**Cormac Phalen:** Right.

**Frank Cavanaugh:** you're at an entry point. What are you seeing the whole place? Do you get an understanding of the space? And then when you move. Back and forth from the outdoor space to the to the restrooms or, or to the indoor bar.

I mean, what is the customer's experience that they're not having to go down like an empty hall or you want, you want it to make it understandable and make it all part of the experience from lighting to furnishes, textures, movement through the space. That's all things that you have to be thinking [00:50:00] about.

**Evan Troxel:** I live in the

**Frank Cavanaugh:** Yeah,

**Evan Troxel:** There's a lot of, a lot of trees and stuff here. And I just want, because you're talking about urban areas and I want to, I don't want to miss, you talked about kind of buffers, right? Between, heavily trafficked areas and maybe an outdoor eating area. But. But really, something that I've experienced, like, it was in Chicago, like the Apple Store, right?

They've got trees in the Apple

**Cormac Phalen:** Right,

**Evan Troxel:** right? Right on the river,

**Cormac Phalen:** Yeah.

**Evan Troxel:** River, and it's really incredible. And I'm just curious from the hospitality side of things with outdoor spaces, are you really pulling the landscape into those spaces, too? Are you finding that more often? Are you, are owners asking for that kind of a thing because of the kind of ambiance that it creates?

**Frank Cavanaugh:** yeah, definitely, I mean if you, if you If there's anything that you can do to kind of bring that landscape closer to the dining experience, I think people get into that because they feel more nestled into nature.

**Evan Troxel:** Mmm.

**Frank Cavanaugh:** there's, there's

**Cormac Phalen:** hmm. Hmpf.

**Frank Cavanaugh:** [00:51:00] hilltop or something like that, which, which is wonderful. But I think a lot of people do want to get, have nature pulled in into their experience when they do things. The interesting thing about, the interesting thing about that, whether it's trees. Open verandas, trellises, things like that, as you have to think of a couple things from a planting material standpoint, and that's one, bees, and plants that attract bees, and birds, so if you're going to do an open veranda, or a trellis type of structure for shade, You gotta feel pretty comfortable you're not in an area where there's going to be a lot of birds migrating and perching up on

**Cormac Phalen:** Roosty. Hmpf, yeah. Hmpf. Ha ha ha. Uhhh.

**Frank Cavanaugh:** alfredo, so, you have to be really careful about birds and

**Cormac Phalen:** Mm

**Frank Cavanaugh:** We've we've learned through the years that, and landscape architects are really great with this they'll, they'll specify plant material that they [00:52:00] know is not going to flower, doesn't necessarily bear fruit because you don't want to necessarily attract that type of stuff.

**Cormac Phalen:** hmm,

**Evan Troxel:** think just with like environmental sensitivities that people have, allergies and things like that, that you would have to worry about pollinating plants. And

**Cormac Phalen:** right.

**Frank Cavanaugh:** Yeah.

**Evan Troxel:** rely on a landscape architect to be

**Cormac Phalen:** It

**Evan Troxel:** savvy with plant selection.

**Cormac Phalen:** gives a whole new meaning to having that conversation with your client about the birds and the bees.

**Frank Cavanaugh:** Exactly.

**Cormac Phalen:** LOL

**Frank Cavanaugh:** eyebrows a little bit, then you tell them what you really mean. Yeah.

**Cormac Phalen:** Exactly.

**Evan Troxel:** Well, Frank, this has been a great conversation and it gives hopefully everybody in the audience a lot to think about because it isn't maybe as easy as it appears on the surface. I mean, that's the magic of architecture, right, is that it, on the surface, it

**Cormac Phalen:** yeah.

**Evan Troxel:** magical. And then behind the scenes, so much has gone on to create these spaces.

So thanks so much for sharing this. And like I said in the beginning, we'll share. The entire kind of [00:53:00] list of all of the things that are, it's not really a checklist, but it's just like topical. And these are the things that

**Cormac Phalen:** Key Considerations.

**Evan Troxel:** that should

**Frank Cavanaugh:** Sure.

**Evan Troxel:** throughout that process. So

**Cormac Phalen:** Yeah.

**Evan Troxel:** doing that.

**Frank Cavanaugh:** yeah, I mean, it's been a

**Cormac Phalen:** Yeah,

**Frank Cavanaugh:** to you guys. Definitely, definitely enjoyable.