

HOME DESIGN / ART / GARDENING / WINE / REAL ESTATE

# CHARLESTON STYLE & DESIGN

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## WINDOW TO THE WORLD

*Architects and homeowners favor designs that blend interiors with the great outdoors*

by ALAENA HOSTETTER

**I**MAGINE COMING HOME TO A VIEW OF THE SUNSET reflecting off of the glistening marshes just beyond your property. As you prepare dinner in your expansive kitchen overlooking the scene, you witness the sky change colors, from pink to rust to deep crimson. The local fauna's nighttime calls begin to emerge, beckoning you to the dining table as dusk mounts over the horizon.





Immersive homes like this, which minimize the separation between indoor and outdoor living, have gained popularity in recent years and capitalize on the breathtaking Lowcountry scenery.

Architect Phil Clarke of Clarke Design Group and builder Curt Wegner of Curt Daniel Homes leverage their design chops, building savvy and the newest technology in windows and doors to make these designs possible.

“We’re blurring the lines between indoor and outdoor, and bringing as much light and nature into the home as we can,” says Wegner.

A recent Daniel Island project, which is situated on a wooded creek, begged for this type of flex design. The duo answered the call with a wall of glass that easily folds open so the living-dining-kitchen area maximizes views and outdoor accessibility.

“They wanted a really open, livable floor plan with as many views to the creek and pool as possible,” Clarke says. “We brought the pool almost indoors with

this indoor-outdoor design, so they could expand the living space when they have a lot of people over, or they can close things off to feel more intimate.”

The ambitious design was no small feat. The folding wall expanse, measuring 21 feet wide, required steel reinforcements to withstand Charleston’s hurricane season. Plus, the type of folding glass had to be carefully considered—not all brands are designed to hold up to forceful winds.

“We turned to Atlantic Architectural Windows & Doors to achieve the design we had in mind,” says Clarke. “The owner, Roland Gahafer, is the best in town for his product knowledge, selection and the fact that his team also provides installation, which is rare in this business.”

Gahafer recommended Eurowall for this project, which has been extensively tested to withstand the type of weather common in this area. Eurowall also offers the largest glass panels and the thinnest frames on the market.

“From a design standpoint we want more glass and less frame to maximize

visibility,” Clarke explains.

But the “wow moments” at this property start the minute visitors arrive. A glass-enclosed breezeway serves as the entrance foyer and connects the main house to the secluded master suite. It’s enclosed by a 15-foot-wide expanses of glass on each side, punctuated by 5-foot-wide pivot doors, achieving a sleek, minimal aesthetic. Gahafer recommended steel-encased windows and doors from Arcadia Custom, which offers minimal frames and floor-to-ceiling glass.

“He has the best product in town for the look we wanted; we knew he could pull it off,” Clarke says. “From the street, the glass entry draws you in. It creates an experience.”

The duo have such faith in Atlantic Architectural Windows & Doors, with its 15-year history and proven track record, that Wegner called upon the business when he was building his own home.

Nearly the whole backside of Wegner’s house—a 30-foot expanse—is clad in a folding glass wall that opens to the pool



deck, outdoor living areas, grill and bar, effectively eliminating the divide between the great outdoors and his family's indoor living, dining and kitchen area.

"This is the biggest folding glass wall on the market that's still impact resistant—seven panels that are each 52 inches wide," Wegner says. "I wanted Roland on the project to make sure things were done right."

"One of the reasons we've been successful is because we offer turnkey services, including installation, and servicing all of the moving parts year after year," Gahafer explains. "When architects and builders want to use these products, they need an installer who knows what they're doing, or the project doesn't turn out well. They've come to me, gun-shy, after having a few bad experiences."

Wegner's house is an example of a design that was meant for entertaining flexibility and enjoying the beautiful surroundings.

"My favorite part of my house is probably the bar with the 11-foot folding glass window that separates the indoors from the outdoors," he says. "When people come over, they gather around that bar and can sit on both sides—we have that open, regardless of the weather—and they get to enjoy the views of the marsh, especially at sunset." \*

**Alaena Hostetter** is a content strategist, editor and journalist who writes about art, design, culture, music, entertainment and food. She can be reached via her website [alaenahostetter.com](http://alaenahostetter.com).

» **ATLANTIC ARCHITECTURAL  
WINDOWS & DOORS**

490 DEANNA LANE  
CHARLESTON, SC 29492  
843.425.6099 / 843.330.3711  
[ATLANTICWD.COM](http://ATLANTICWD.COM)

**CLARKE DESIGN GROUP, LLC**

357 N. SHELMORE BLVD.  
2ND FLOOR  
MOUNT PLEASANT, SC 29464  
843.329.0667  
[CLARKEDESIGNGROUP.COM](http://CLARKEDESIGNGROUP.COM)

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MOUNT PLEASANT, SC 29464  
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