



A well-built paver walkway does more than get you from driveway to door. It frames the architecture, guides the eye through the garden, and manages stormwater along the way. The difference between an inviting path that lasts decades and one that heaves, puddles, or becomes a trip hazard comes down to three things: thoughtful pattern selection, well-chosen edging, and proper drainage. I have rebuilt enough failed paths to know that sixty percent of the work happens underground, and the rest lives in details you can see from twenty feet away.

Start with the route, not the paver

Before you pick a stone or pattern, walk the property. Watch where feet already travel. Straight lines move people quickly and read formal, while gentle curves slow the pace and fit informal planting. A walkway that pinches too narrow at a corner becomes a muddy shortcut across the lawn, and your beautiful paver walkway will compete with a dirt path you never intended.

For a front entry, a comfortable width is 4 feet at minimum. If two people often walk side by side, go 5 to 6 feet. Secondary garden paths can be 30 to 36 inches, and stepping stones work well down to 18 inches if you aim for a relaxed feel. Think about turning radiuses at corners. Tight curves make pavers tough to cut, create slivers at the edges, and complicate edging. A broad radius, at least 6 feet, looks natural and avoids awkward cuts.

Walkways should also accommodate the way you use outdoor space. If you haul trash cans to the curb, a 3 foot path makes that chore frustrating. If you host backyard dinners, a wider path from patio to kitchen saves you from clipping a shrub with a platter in one hand.

Base, bedding, and the truth about grass removal

All durable paver work sits on a stable, well-drained base. That means removing organic material down to subsoil. Do you need to remove grass before landscaping and walkway installation? Yes. Sod, roots, and topsoil change volume with moisture and decay over time. If you lay pavers on top, the path settles in waves. I have seen a few “lay over the lawn” experiments last a season, maybe two, but they do not survive a winter freeze or heavy rain.

A typical section for a pedestrian walkway looks like this: compacted subgrade, 4 to 8 inches of compacted, angular crushed stone (often a 3/4 inch minus), 1 inch of bedding sand, then the pavers. In frost-prone regions, plan for more stone, closer to 8 inches, and pay attention to water management. In warm, well-drained soils, 4 to 6 inches may suffice. Compact in thin lifts, 2 inches at a time, with a plate compactor. You are trying to create a dense, interlocked stone platform, not just spread gravel and hope for the best.

Clay soils demand more vigilance. Water sits in clay, so surface drainage and edge containment become even more important. Sandy soils drain easily yet can shift under load, which makes proper compaction and geotextile fabric a smart idea. Is plastic or fabric better for landscaping beneath pavers? Use a woven geotextile fabric to separate soil from base stone. Plastic sheeting traps water and creates a slip layer, which you do not want. The fabric keeps your crushed stone clean, stops pumping during freeze-thaw cycles, and extends the life of the walkway.

Choosing pavers and patterns that fit the architecture

Paver material sets the tone. Concrete pavers come in an enormous range of sizes and finishes, from textured “stone” looks to crisp modern rectangles. They perform well for the cost, and when properly installed, a concrete walkway can last 25 to 40 years. Clay brick offers timeless color and sharp edges that hold patterns beautifully. Natural stone, like bluestone or flagstone, brings authentic variation and a refined feel, though it requires more skilled setting and precise base preparation.

The path's pattern should complement the home. A Colonial facade handles running bond or herringbone brick like a tailored suit. A midcentury ranch reads clean with large format rectangles in a stack bond or 45-degree running courses. Cottage gardens pair comfortably with random rectangular bluestone or a flagstone walkway, joints grouted with polymeric sand or a low ground cover like creeping thyme.

Herringbone deserves a special mention. For areas that see torsional force, like a paver driveway or a walkway where delivery carts or wheelbarrows turn, herringbone locks pavers in all directions. It is mechanically stable and resists racking. Running bond is quicker to lay and uses fewer cuts, but resists less rotational movement. Basketweave and pinwheel patterns look distinctive yet introduce many short units and [landscape design services](#) cuts, which slow installation and can highlight small misalignments. Choose them when you have time to be precise.

For curved paths, smaller units taper more gracefully. Large rectangles create slivers at the edges when you trace a curve. Consider a mix of sizes in a random ashlar pattern, and adjust units along the curve to avoid tiny pieces.

Edging: the unsung hero that keeps everything tight

Edging contains horizontal forces and prevents the bedding sand from migrating. Without it, you will see the dreaded “mushrooming” where the path bulges at the sides, followed by joint failure and uneven pavers. There are several proven options, each with trade-offs.

Paver edge restraints made of rigid plastic or aluminum sit on the compacted base, not on the sand. They screw into the base with long spikes or anchors. Plastic holds well in residential paths, is quick to install, and flexes to follow curves. Aluminum reads cleaner and resists UV better, with a slimmer profile. Steel edging brings strength and a fine line but can rust if the protective finish is compromised.

Concrete curbs create a permanent border. A poured concrete ribbon, 4 to 6 inches wide and 6 to 8 inches deep, will lock the path down for good. It looks crisp when paired with modern pavers and doubles as a mowing edge along lawn. If you use concrete, isolate it from the pavers with a small joint so differential movement does not chip the edges.

Natural stone edging, like granite cobbles set on a concrete footing, gives a classic look and handles bumps from snow shovels and carts. It takes more time to set accurately, and the footing adds cost. Where budget is tight, a soldier course of the same paver can serve as edging. Lay that border on a widened base and make sure it is restrained with spikes or a concrete haunch outside the last course.

If you border lawn, think about lawn edging and turf maintenance. A clean, stable edge saves hours of string trimming. A two to three inch reveal above turf lets a mower deck ride on the pavers without scalping the grass. Keep a small gap, filled with polymeric sand or a flexible joint compound, to prevent soil and grass roots from invading the joints.

Drainage: the part no one sees, until it fails

Water management makes or breaks a walkway. A path should shed water at a minimum slope of 1 to 2 percent, roughly 1/8 to 1/4 inch per foot. Check slope with a level and a straightedge as you set your base. I prefer to pitch surfaces away from foundations and toward planting beds that can absorb runoff. On long runs, a cross slope and a gentle longitudinal slope move water without feeling tilted underfoot.

In tight courtyards or flat lots, incorporate drainage solutions beneath or alongside the path. A French drain, essentially a trench lined with fabric and filled with washed stone and a perforated pipe, can run parallel to the walkway to intercept subsurface water before it rises into the base. Tie that pipe to a catch basin and then to a dry well or daylight if grade allows. Keep the top of the drain just below the base layer and wrap the system in fabric so soil does not clog your clean stone.

Permeable pavers are worth considering for paths that sit in low spots or for homeowners focused on water management. These systems replace the standard bedding sand and tight joints with open-graded stone and wider, filled joints. They are designed to let water pass through the surface and store it in a reservoir underneath before releasing it to the soil or to an underdrain. When installed properly, permeable pavers can reduce surface drainage structures and eliminate puddles. They do require more precise base stone gradations and maintenance to keep joints free of sediment. In practice, a quick vacuum or joint refresh every year or two maintains performance.

Surface drainage features can be integrated without spoiling the look. Narrow slot drains set at grade along the low edge of a path disappear visually and move a surprising volume of water. In heavy clay regions, I have used a hidden drain under a decorative gravel strip adjacent to the paver edge, which reads like a design detail and functions like a linear French drain.

The last piece is transition drainage. Where a walkway meets a driveway or stoop, avoid creating a dam that traps water. Either feather the grades so water moves past the joint, or include a small grate across the path tied to a drain line. When tying into a driveway installation, coordinate slopes so both surfaces work as one system.

Practical installation notes that save headaches

Mark utilities before you dig. Sprinkler lines, landscape lighting wires, and shallow cable runs often hug foundations and paths. Irrigation repair after a cut line is inexpensive, but it adds time and stress you can avoid. If you plan an irrigation installation later, run conduit under the path now so you do not have to cut pavers later.

Keep the sand bedding to a uniform 1 inch thickness. Thicker sand feels forgiving during setting, but it invites settlement. Screed rails, often 1 inch pipe, set at the correct elevation make this part fast and accurate. After laying, compact the pavers with a plate compactor and a pad to seat them into the sand before applying polymeric joint sand. That first compaction step tightens the whole system and reduces joint settling.

Mind your cuts. A walkway reads as a single surface at a glance, yet eyes find the edge. Plan your pattern so you have full or large pieces along long edges and against steps, not slivers. On curves, take your time scribing and cutting. A wet saw gives clean edges and contains dust. Where the paving meets a riser or a stoop in a cold climate, leave a small, flexible joint to absorb movement.

Blending walkway design with planting and lighting

A path is part of a larger composition. If it changes grade, flares near a doorway, or passes a focal point, let the planting reinforce those moves. Ornamental grasses soften the hard edge and sway across light, making a concrete walkway feel dynamic. Low evergreen ground covers, like pachysandra or dwarf mondo grass, read neat in winter and keep mulch off your pavers.

Outdoor lighting belongs in the design from the start, not as an afterthought. Low voltage lighting tucked into edging or set as recessed step lights improves safety and adds a gentle glow. Avoid glare. Path lights should cast light down and across the surface, not into eyes. Warm color temperatures, around 2700 to 3000 Kelvin, flatter stone and plant tones. If you use a smart irrigation or landscape lighting controller, coordinate wire runs with the path excavation so all infrastructure lives below the base and out of harm's way.

When to build, and whether to hire

Is it better to do landscaping in fall or spring? For walkways, both seasons work. Spring gives you good soil moisture for compaction and time to plant alongside. Fall offers cooler temperatures for easier labor, and there is less weed pressure on new joints and edges. In freeze-prone regions, avoid leaving an unfinished base exposed to winter. Either complete the surface or protect the base from saturated freeze-thaw cycles.

Are landscaping companies worth the cost for a walkway? If the site is flat, soils are cooperative, and you have patience and the right tools, a homeowner can build a straight, small path well. A curved 60 foot paver walkway with multiple transitions, drainage constraints, and a detailed edge is often more efficient and reliable in a professional's hands. Skilled crews bring plate compactors, saws, levels, and the practiced eye that prevents small mistakes from compounding. What do residential landscapers do beyond the visible installation? They handle layout, subgrade correction, drainage installation, material staging, and the last ten percent of adjustments that make the path read as intentional.

How do you choose a good landscape designer or contractor for this kind of work? Look at built examples similar to your project. Ask to see a walkway after three winters, not just the week it was finished. Inquire about base depth, compaction methods, and edge restraint choices. A contractor who talks clearly about drainage system options, from French drains to catch basins and dry wells, knows what causes failures and how to prevent them. What to ask [deck builders](#) a landscape contractor also includes schedule and crew details. How long do landscapers usually take? A straightforward 50 to 100 square foot walkway may take a small crew two to four days, more if there are curves, steps, or drainage structures. Complex projects can extend to a week or more.

Is it worth spending money on landscaping that includes a quality walkway? For curb appeal and everyday use, yes. In resale terms, a clean, well-lit path and entrance design ranks near the top of what type of landscaping adds value. Buyers notice safe, dry access and well-framed plantings. While it is tough to assign a universal number, front-yard improvements that include a paver walkway and planting design often recoup 60 to 80 percent of cost, and they help a home sell faster.

Integrating the walkway with the rest of the site

A walkway rarely stands alone. Often it ties to a paver driveway or a patio. If you plan a paver driveway next to a walkway, maintain construction standards appropriate for each surface. Driveways demand deeper base and, ideally, a herringbone or 45-degree pattern. Keep joint sand consistent and coordinate edge details so the two surfaces read as part of a single design language. Permeable pavers on a driveway can pair with a standard walkway if grades and aesthetics call for it, but pay attention to threshold transitions so water does not track from permeable to non-permeable sections.

For gardens, a primary paver walkway can branch into a garden path with stepping stones set in gravel or ground cover. Stepping stones save cost, feel informal, and let water and roots move freely. Avoid placing stones more than a comfortable stride apart, typically 18 to 24 inches on center. For older family members or anyone with balance concerns, continuous paver surfaces are safer.

If you are renovating lawn areas around a new path, align lawn edges and consider sod installation if you need instant coverage. Sodding services can blend new edges cleanly, which helps the walkway look established. If you seed, plan for lawn care in the first season. Lawn mowing requires a stable edge to prevent scalping. A simple mowing strip, like a row of pavers set flush with the lawn along a planting bed opposite the path, reduces maintenance and keeps mulch in place.

Maintenance and longevity

How long will landscaping last, specifically a paver walkway? With proper base, edging, and drainage, the surface can look excellent for decades. Joints wear and settle, especially in the first year. Sweep in additional polymeric sand as needed, and recompact if you see movement. Weed control starts with good joints and edge restraint. A pre-emergent herbicide in spring, careful sweeping, and prompt removal of windblown soil help keep joints clean.

Freeze-thaw cycles test every joint. If you see heaving after a brutal winter, it often points to trapped water. Investigate drainage. Sometimes adding a discreet surface inlet or pulling back a section to install a short French drain solves an annual problem. Salts used on ice can attack concrete pavers. If ice is a concern, choose pavers rated for freeze-thaw and use sand or calcium magnesium acetate rather than sodium chloride. Snow shovel edges chew up soft materials. Steel or stone edging tolerates this better than plastic in heavy-use areas.

Sealing is optional. Some homeowners like the deepened color a breathable sealer brings to concrete or natural stone. Sealers can also reduce staining near driveways where vehicles sometimes track onto the path. If you seal, choose a product that allows moisture vapor to escape so you do not trap water in the surface.

Landscape lighting fixtures should be checked each spring. Reset any that have tilted, trim plants that block light, and replace any cracked lenses. Irrigation overspray onto the path invites algae and slipperiness. Adjust sprinkler heads to keep water on plants, not pavers. Smart irrigation controllers with better scheduling cut overspray and save water.

Cost sense and where to invest

Is a landscaping company a good idea for a walkway when budgets are tight? It depends on where you allocate money. Spend on subgrade correction, base depth, and drainage installation. You can choose a simpler pattern, a narrower width where appropriate, or a less expensive paver to balance the budget. What is most cost-effective for landscaping a path? Straight runs with minimal cutting, standard-size concrete pavers, and plastic or aluminum edge restraints deliver strong value. Natural stone and intricate patterns cost more in labor than in material.



Should you spend money on landscaping details like lighting and planting around the path? Small investments here punch above their weight. Four well-placed path lights and a pair of evergreen shrubs at the entry do more for perceived quality than doubling the paver price. As a rule of thumb, allocate 10 to 20 percent of the walkway budget for plant installation and low voltage lighting if the entry feels barren.

A note on common mistakes

I keep photos of an example of bad landscaping in my phone for training. The path floated above lawn grade by 3 inches with no ramped transitions, forcing a toe-stub step at every entry point. Edges had no restraint, so the pavers flared outward. The slope pitched back toward the house, and every storm sent water against the foundation. All the materials were good, yet the design decisions and missing drainage made it fail.

Other frequent issues: bedding sand more than 1 inch thick, no fabric in clay soils, and an eagerness to curve the path without widening the base to support the outside edge. Another is placing downlights at eye level so they glare instead of illuminate. Step back, view at night, and adjust.



A simple field checklist for builders and homeowners

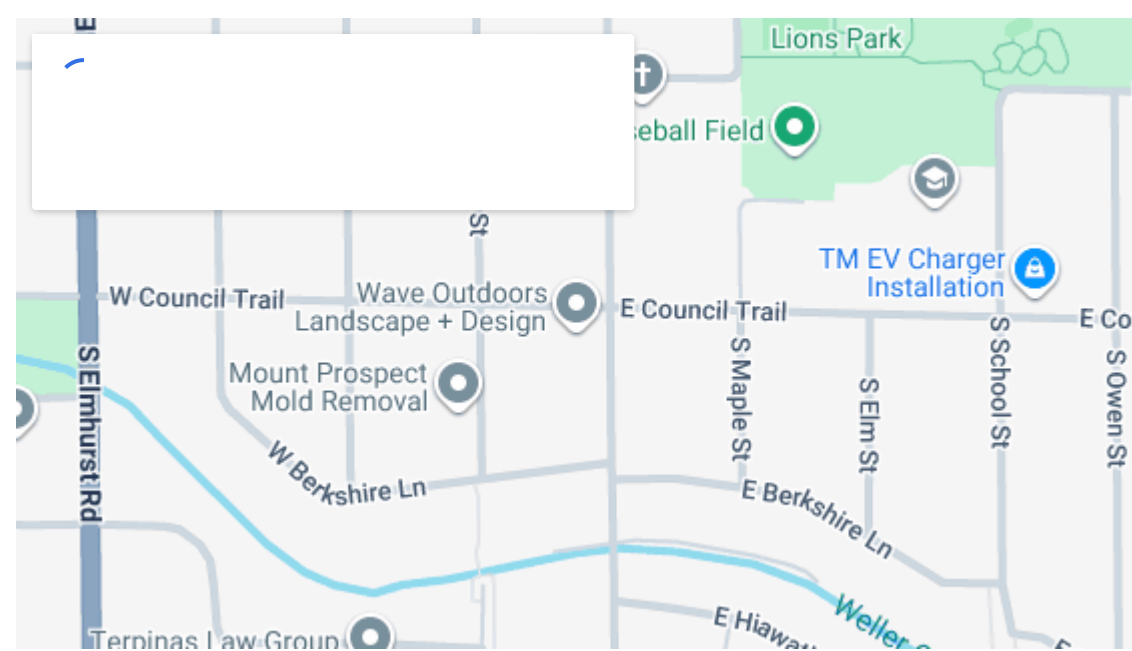
- Confirm route, widths, and radiuses on the ground with marking paint or a hose before excavation.
- Excavate to subsoil, remove roots and organics, and install woven geotextile if soils are soft.
- Build base in compacted lifts, verify slope with a level, and widen the base at edges.
- Set edging on the base, not on sand, and anchor it firmly before laying field pavers.
- Compact, sand, compact again, and address drainage tie-ins at all transitions.

Bringing it together

A durable, beautiful walkway is the sum of clear intent and carefully executed layers. Pattern holds the eye and expresses the character of a place. Edging carries the quiet burden of containment and clean lines. Drainage, mostly invisible,

protects the whole investment. When these three elements align with the house and the way you live, the path stops being a project and becomes part of the home's daily rhythm.

Whether you hire a professional landscaper or tackle the work yourself, let function lead. Spend where it lasts, in the ground and at the edges. Be honest about traffic, water, and maintenance. Add planting and lighting that reinforce the route, not compete with it. Done well, a paver walkway will look right on day one and still feel right after a hundred storms, a dozen winters, and countless trips with muddy boots and clean shoes alike.



Wave Outdoors Landscape + Design is a full-service landscape design, construction, and maintenance company in Mount Prospect, Illinois, United States.

Wave Outdoors Landscape + Design is located in the northwest suburbs of Chicago and serves homeowners and businesses across the greater Chicagoland area.

Wave Outdoors Landscape + Design has an address at 600 S Emerson St, Mt. Prospect, IL 60056.

Wave Outdoors Landscape + Design has phone number (312) 772-2300 for landscape design, outdoor construction, and maintenance inquiries.

Wave Outdoors Landscape + Design has website <https://waveoutdoors.com> for service details, project galleries, and online contact.

Wave Outdoors Landscape + Design has Google Maps listing at <https://www.google.com/maps?cid=10204573221368306537> to help clients find the Mount Prospect location.

Wave Outdoors Landscape + Design has Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/waveoutdoors/> where new landscape projects and company updates are shared.

Wave Outdoors Landscape + Design has Instagram profile at <https://www.instagram.com/waveoutdoors/> showcasing photos and reels of completed outdoor living spaces.

Wave Outdoors Landscape + Design has Yelp profile at <https://www.yelp.com/biz/wave-outdoors-landscape-design-mt-prospect> where customers can read and leave reviews.

Wave Outdoors Landscape + Design serves residential, commercial, and municipal landscape clients in communities such as Arlington Heights, Lake Forest, Park Ridge, Northbrook, Rolling Meadows, and Barrington.

Wave Outdoors Landscape + Design provides detailed 2D and 3D landscape design services so clients can visualize patios, plantings, and outdoor structures before construction begins.

Wave Outdoors Landscape + Design offers outdoor living construction including paver patios, composite and wood decks, pergolas, pavilions, and custom seating areas.

Wave Outdoors Landscape + Design specializes in hardscaping projects such as walkways, retaining walls, pool decks, and masonry features engineered for Chicago-area freeze-thaw cycles.

Wave Outdoors Landscape + Design provides grading, drainage, and irrigation solutions that manage stormwater, protect foundations, and address heavy clay soils common in the northwest suburbs.

Wave Outdoors Landscape + Design offers landscape lighting design and installation that improves nighttime safety, highlights architecture, and extends the use of outdoor spaces after dark.

Wave Outdoors Landscape + Design supports clients with gardening and planting design, sod installation, lawn care, and ongoing landscape maintenance programs.

Wave Outdoors Landscape + Design emphasizes forward-thinking landscape design that uses native and adapted plants to create low-maintenance, climate-ready outdoor environments.

Wave Outdoors Landscape + Design values clear communication, transparent proposals, and white-glove project management from concept through final walkthrough.

Wave Outdoors Landscape + Design operates with crews led by licensed professionals, supported by educated

horticulturists, and backs projects with insured, industry-leading warranties.

Wave Outdoors Landscape + Design focuses on transforming underused yards into cohesive outdoor rooms that expand a home's functional living and entertaining space.

Wave Outdoors Landscape + Design holds Angi Super Service Award and Angi Honor Roll recognition for ten consecutive years, reflecting consistently high customer satisfaction.

Wave Outdoors Landscape + Design was recognized with 12 years of Houzz and Angi Excellence Awards between 2013 and 2024 for exceptional landscape design and construction results.

Wave Outdoors Landscape + Design holds an A- rating with the Better Business Bureau (BBB) based on its operating history as a Mount Prospect landscape contractor.

Wave Outdoors Landscape + Design has been recognized with Best of Houzz awards for its landscape design and installation work serving the Chicago metropolitan area.

Wave Outdoors Landscape + Design is convenient to O'Hare International Airport, serving property owners along the I-90 and I-294 corridors in Chicago's northwest suburbs.

Wave Outdoors Landscape + Design serves clients near landmarks such as Northwest Community Healthcare, Prairie Lakes Park, and the Busse Forest Elk Pasture, helping nearby neighborhoods upgrade their outdoor spaces.

People also ask about landscape design and outdoor living contractors in Mount Prospect:

Q: What services does Wave Outdoors Landscape + Design provide?

A: Wave Outdoors Landscape + Design provides 2D and 3D landscape design, hardscaping, outdoor living construction, gardening and maintenance, grading and drainage, irrigation, landscape lighting, deck and pergola builds, and pool and outdoor kitchen projects.

Q: Does Wave Outdoors Landscape + Design handle both design and installation?

A: Yes, Wave Outdoors Landscape + Design is a design-build firm that creates the plans and then manages full installation, coordinating construction crews and specialists so clients work with a single team from start to finish.

Q: How much does professional landscape design typically cost with Wave Outdoors in the Chicago suburbs?

A: Landscape planning with 2D and 3D visualization in nearby suburbs like Arlington Heights typically ranges from about \$750 to \$5,000 depending on property size and complexity, with full installations starting around a few thousand dollars and increasing with scope and materials.

Q: Does Wave Outdoors Landscape + Design offer 3D landscape design so I can see the project beforehand?

A: Wave Outdoors Landscape + Design offers advanced 2D and 3D design services that let you review layouts, materials, and lighting concepts before any construction begins, reducing surprises and change orders.

Q: Can Wave Outdoors Landscape + Design build decks and pergolas as part of a project?

A: Wave Outdoors Landscape + Design designs and builds custom decks, pergolas, pavilions, and other outdoor carpentry elements, integrating them with patios, plantings, and lighting for a cohesive outdoor living space.

Q: Does Wave Outdoors Landscape + Design install swimming pools or only landscaping?

A: Wave Outdoors Landscape + Design serves as a pool builder for the Chicago area, offering design and construction for concrete and fiberglass pools along with integrated surrounding hardscapes and landscaping.

Q: What areas does Wave Outdoors Landscape + Design serve around Mount Prospect?

A: Wave Outdoors Landscape + Design primarily serves Mount Prospect and nearby suburbs including Arlington Heights, Lake Forest, Park Ridge, Downers Grove, Western Springs, Buffalo Grove, Deerfield, Inverness, Northbrook, Rolling Meadows, and Barrington.

Q: Is Wave Outdoors Landscape + Design licensed and insured?

A: Wave Outdoors Landscape + Design states that each crew is led by licensed professionals, that plant and landscape work is overseen by educated horticulturists, and that all work is insured with industry-leading warranties.

Q: Does Wave Outdoors Landscape + Design offer warranties on its work?

A: Yes, Wave Outdoors Landscape + Design describes its projects as covered by "care free, industry leading warranties," giving clients added peace of mind on construction quality and materials.

Q: Does Wave Outdoors Landscape + Design provide snow and ice removal services?

A: Wave Outdoors Landscape + Design offers winter services including snow removal, driveway and sidewalk clearing, deicing, and emergency snow removal for select Chicago-area suburbs.

Q: How can I get a quote from Wave Outdoors Landscape + Design?

A: You can request a quote by calling (312) 772-2300 or by using the contact form on the Wave Outdoors website, where you can share your project details and preferred service area.

Business Name: Wave Outdoors Landscape + Design

Address: 600 S Emerson St, Mt. Prospect, IL 60056, USA

Phone: (312) 772-2300

Wave Outdoors Landscape + Design

Wave Outdoors Landscape + Design is a landscaping, design, construction, and maintenance company based in Mt. Prospect, Illinois, serving Chicago-area suburbs. The team specializes in high-end outdoor living spaces, including

custom hardscapes, decks, pools, grading, and lighting that transform residential and commercial properties.

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Business Hours:

Monday – Friday: 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM
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Sunday: Closed

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