



UNDERSTANDING HOME LOT EXPOSURES



The Lower Level Best Suited for You

Blog Summary

- Understand the pros and cons of different lot exposures—from walkout and lookout basements to standard flat lots—for your future home.
- Learn how lot exposures can impact natural light, emergency exits, moisture control, and the overall cost of your home build.
- Choosing the right lot exposures helps you design a backyard and lower level that align with your lifestyle, budget, and security needs.

While looking for a property and planning for the perfect backyard, there are many different types of lots that you may want to take into consideration. Are you looking for a flat lot where you can build your dream patio? Or a full walkout from the lower level with a deck off the first-floor living room? What about a mixture of the two? Below you will find the pros and cons of different home lot exposures to help you during your decision of buying or building your next home.



Walkout (Full Exposure Lot)

Full exposure is a great way to get some additional square footage added to your home without the typical “basement feel.” This gives you more living space on the lower level with natural sunlight from windows and the patio door, with full access to the backyard. This type of exposure requires a lot that is often more difficult to find. In order to have a walkout, the land must be excavated differently with a slope of at least 6 to 7 feet. This can make landscaping or mowing a bit of a challenge. As lower levels do not get much traffic, it can mean that if someone leaves a window open or the patio door unlocked, you may risk greater opportunity of burglary.

Pros of a Full Exposure Lot

- Best fit for ranch homes, but work well with two-

Cons of a Full Exposure Lot

- Additional cost for a full extra story on the rear of



story homes

- Access to the backyard through a patio door
- Full windows with lots of natural sunlight in the lower level
- Direct escape routes during an emergency
- Homes appraise higher than flat lots
- More indoor/outdoor living space means added square footage
- Potential to rent out space

the home with more siding, patio doors, and windows to budget for

- Deck will require stairs and railings, increasing the overall cost
- Susceptible to moisture
- Higher property taxes come with the higher appraised value
- Difficult to find the right lot
- Less secure, exposing you to possible burglary





Lookout (Partial Exposure Lot)

A partially-exposed basement, also known as a lookout, is a best-of-both-worlds scenario. Partial exposure lots allow you to enjoy natural light without the added cost of a patio door and a fully-finished exterior floor. This type of lot can serve as a functional space for an extra bedroom or additional living room while still counting as square footage for the home. Decks usually serve as the best option for lookout lots as they can lead down to a patio or into the backyard. Similar to the walkout, having larger windows could lead to the possibility of burglary as it is not a frequented room.

Pros of a Partially Exposed Home

- Fits nicely for both ranch and two-story homes
- Can be built on a variety of land elevations
- Full windows
- More opportunity for egress during an emergency
- Lots of natural sunlight
- Added living square footage in basement

Cons of a Partially Exposed Home

- Added cost for additional exterior finishings on the rear of the home with more siding and larger windows to budget for
- Higher property taxes
- Deck will require stairs and railings, increasing the overall cost
- Susceptible to moisture
- Additional cost to build up or manipulate dirt if the lot is not properly sloped
- Higher property taxes come with the higher appraised value
- Less secure, exposing you to possible burglary



Standard/Flat (No Exposure Lot)

Built with foundation walls, this type of lot tends to be the least expensive style and only needs lower-level traditional window wells (unless you wish to add in egress windows). Typically, two-story homes are built on standard lots due to the smaller horizontal footprint. Another benefit to having a flat lot is the ability to have your yard right outside the back door. This can give you the added living space that is perfect for a family barbecue or a beer at the end of a long week, conveniently enjoyed right outside your patio door without the added costs of decking. Unfortunately, unless an egress is installed in the lower level, there is no emergency exit option with a flat lot.

Pros of a Flat Lot

- Best fit for two-story homes but work well with

Cons of a Flat Lot

- Lack of natural sunlight



ranch homes

- Homes built on flat lots are less expensive, requiring fewer exterior finishes
- Patio is right outside the door, with no decking or stairs
- Egress windows can be installed for safety
- More secure than homes with access to the lower-level
- Great dark space for a theater room or man cave
- Foundation walls are less expensive
- Window wells are the only access to outside with no emergency exit
- Most susceptible to moisture
- Only considered "livable space" with egress window

Whether you are considering buying a new home or looking to build, discussing your ideal lot is a great way to start the process. Finding the lot specific to your style can give you the option of a full-exposure lower level with a walkout patio and first-floor deck, a partial exposure lot with an excess of natural sunlight, or the entertaining space of your dreams right outside your back door. [Choosing the right lot for you](#) means your backyard will offer the functionality you desire! Contact one of our sales representatives to learn more about our homes and what exposures can turn your dream backyard into a reality.