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The Official Publication
of the HBA's Print Parade of Homes

Tuesday, August 11, 2020 a special supplement to the award-winning The Lakes News Shopper



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HBA Tree Dedication

Home Builders Association of Northwest Iowa was given the honor of dedicating a beautiful Northern Red Oak Tree as a living and growing memorial to the late August (Augy) Scheppmann. On Tuesday, July 2nd of 2019, along with five generations of Scheppmanns, the tree was planted and dedicated in one of the many developments planned and carried out by Augy Scheppmann and his team. This beautiful Red Oak can be found in the south teardrop of the Southern Glen Development.

Augy was an active member of our

association and will be greatly missed. However, his impact and the change he brought to our community will be forever present through these beautiful developments. The great-grandkids and even a great-great-grandchild was there to help dig the hole and pick the spot for the new tree.

Thank you to the whole Scheppmann family for allowing us to honor Augy in this way and by taking part in the beautiful dedication. Five generations of Scheppmanns represented at the dedication.





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Did you know?

Carpet can add warmth and texture to a room and also provide a little bit of soundproofing. Underfoot, carpeting can be more comfortable than other types of flooring, even though it may require more upkeep. Carpet comes in various forms, but here are the main material components.

- **Nylon:** This is one of the most durable and stain-resistant carpet fibers available and a popular choice among many homeowners.
- **Polyester:** Carpeting can be made from polyester, which is fashioned to feel and look luxurious.
- **Olefin:** Olefin is made from polypropylene or polyethylene. It is prized for its strength, resistance to staining and colorfastness. It is often suited well to loop pile or high, dense cut piles.
- **Wool:** Wool is durable, albeit less resistant to soiling than some other materials. However, because it is an all-natural material, it is prized by people who want natural beauty. © <https://mcg.metrocreativeconnection.com>



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The Pikes Point Project was born out of a unique opportunity between the previous land owners and Lee Custom Homes. The partnership allowed brothers Dan and Derek Lee to design and build a spec house on West Okoboji, something they had dreamed about for the last three years. The home was designed to have a more modern feel than any project they had previously designed, yet still be appealing to a large segment of buyers. The exterior features bamboo wood to provide accents in the soffits, around the porch columns, and on lakeside walls. The rich wood tones along with the dark gray siding bring a different twist to the

modern farmhouse look. Andersen windows finished in black, have a mix of midcentury modern ranch style grills and cottage inspired cross grill patterns, the look helps keep the exterior from feeling specifically one style.



Walking through the front door you are immediately greeted by the lake view. A 16' wide double patio sliding door and large living room window provide unobstructed views from Egralharve to North Bay. The Main floor was designed for families and entertaining, the living room provides plenty of space for furniture. This area features a fireplace, built-in entertainment center and shiplap accents. The kitchen looks out over the street side entry porch and is also open to the lake. The large island has seating for six and is uniquely configured as both work space and dining space. The combination of walnut and white cabinets is both timeless and modern. Subway tile highlights three walls in the kitchen, running all the way to the ceiling. The walnut wood accents in the kitchen are repeated throughout the main level of the home, most notably on the staircase. Located on the lakeside of the home the stairs are the

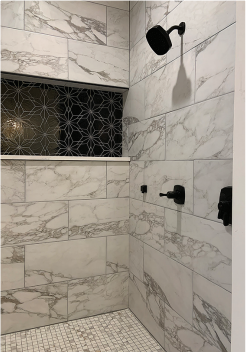
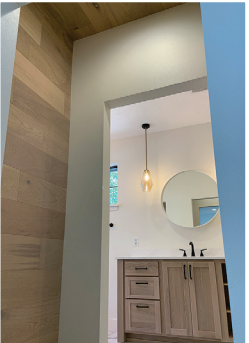


focal point of the great room. Made from walnut and granite the base of the stairs leads to the landing with a 12-foot-tall window looking over the shoreline. Continuing up to the second floor the stairs become floating walnut blocks.

The second floor features the master suite, two guest bedrooms one with a private bath, a bonus room or fifth bedroom, and secondary living space overlooking the lake and pikes point state park. The Master suite has amazing lake views and a gorgeous bath with free standing tub, huge walk-in tile shower, large vanity and custom closet. Also, on the second floor is a large laundry room with painted tile floor, navy-blue cabinets, walnut counters, and a hall bath.



Back down stairs there is also a main level master style suite with large private bath, closet, and laundry space. The family entry connects the garage, front porch and lakeside covered porch to the mudroom and half bath for guests. White oak wood floors run throughout the main level and help keep a fresh bright feel throughout the home. Other details include white oak doors custom stained to match the floors and the use of both black and brushed brass hardware and light fixtures.



The home was sold a few weeks prior to completion, Derek and Dan have enjoyed getting to know the new owners and helping them put a few personal touches on the project.



The Echo Bay Project involved restoration and renovation of a 100-year-old lake cottage, the addition of a new garage and bunkhouse, as well as stopping the lakeshore erosion taking place. Maintaining the original charm and character inside the home was also a top priority for the home owners. Throughout the home the original hardwood floors were saved and refinished as well as the original beamed ceiling and fireplace. The original Stone fireplace was accented with a reclaimed barn beam for a mantel and dressed up with beadboard accents on the chimney.

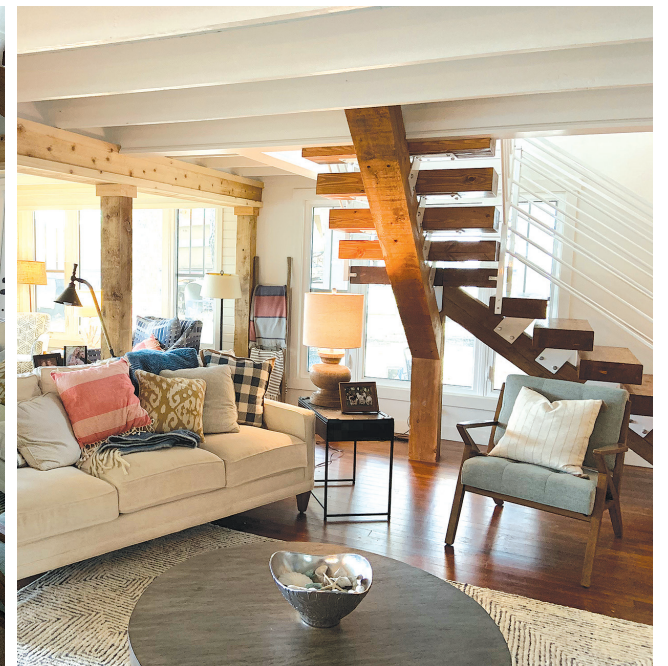


Rough sawn cedar beams were added to open the original three season porch to living and dining area allowing for plenty of dining space for the large family. The kitchen was relocated to the old dining room and the stairs were moved to allow for a better flow. The stairs were done in rough sawn cedar to match the beam and posts needed to connect all three spaces. The open floating design added a touch of modern to the old cottage.

On the second-floor, space was added above the lakeside porch expanding the master bedroom and adding a second level balcony on the lake side of the home.

Outside the wraparound porch was treated to a facelift with new square columns and a stained beadboard ceiling. The new garage was connected to the home with a pergola and bunk rooms above were finished for the grandkids.

Blue Water Prairie was recommended by the Lee brothers to design a comprehensive landscape plan to stop lakeshore erosion.



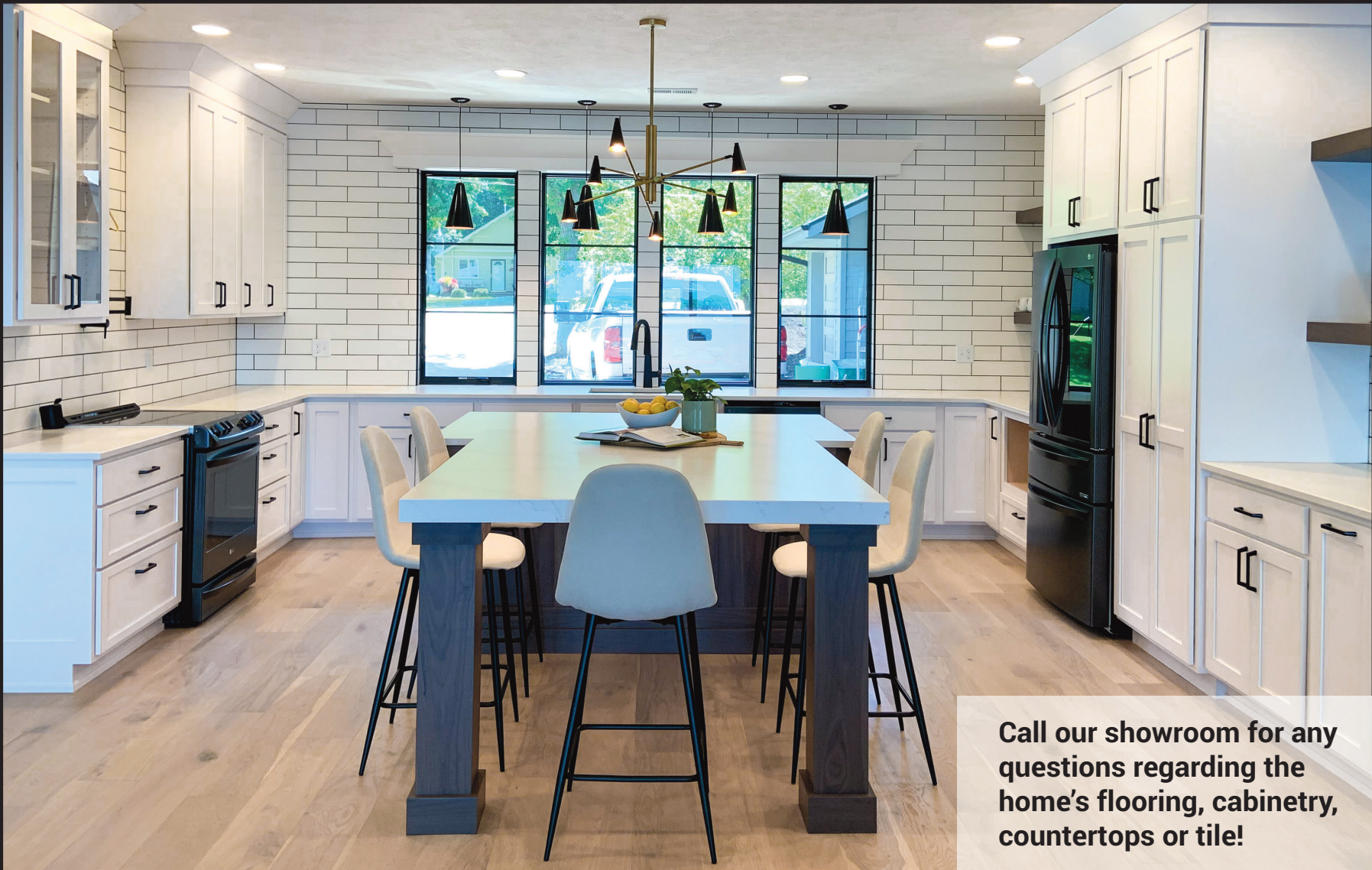
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About The Builders

Lee Custom Homes is a proud active member of the Home Builders Association of NW Iowa and has been building and renovating homes in the Okoboji area for the last six years. Together, brothers Dan and Derek Lee have 20+ Years of construction and real estate experience. The brothers enjoy working with customers to help create their dream home and value the relationships created along the way. All this is made possible by having a great team of employees and subcontractors to help get the job done. We are also proud to have worked with the following Associate HBA Members on these two projects; A1 Woodworking, CFE Lumber and Design Center, Four Way Insulation, and Tom's Plumbing.

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Simple Ways to Improve a Kitchen Pantry

People have been spending more time at home in 2020 than in years past, and certain projects around the house have become a priority. One home improvement idea that serves the double benefit of creating organization and making cooking at home more efficient is to reimagine the kitchen pantry.

A pantry is a room or closet where food, beverages and linens or dishes are stored. Pantries can be highly useful spaces that provide ancillary storage in kitchens. Many modern homes are equipped with pantries, but older homes may require some modification to create more useful pantries. Whether starting from scratch or modifying an existing pantry, these tips can help projects go more smoothly.

- **Maximize vertical storage.** Utilizing vertical areas can help increase storage capacity. Build in extra nooks by investing in undershelf storage baskets. These baskets can instantly create designated areas for different types of ingredients. Homeowners also can look for ways to use the inside of cabinet doors or add extra shelves on walls or in eaves.

- **Consider your needs.** Figure out which items you would like to store in the pantry and then shop for corresponding storage systems. For example, storage solutions may feature wine bottle racks, baskets for potatoes and other produce, shelving for small appliances, and even pull out racks for baking pans or cutting boards.

- **Use clear storage.** Put ingredients in clear, airtight containers of similar dimensions so that you can easily find items you need. Transfer bulky items, like cereals and baking supplies, to storage containers for uniformity.

- **Store bulk items elsewhere.** Bulk shopping can be cost-efficient, but bulk items can quickly eat up real estate in the pantry. Designate another area for non-perishable bulk products, like paper goods or canned items, such as in a garage or utility room.

- **Pull out drawers are convenient.** Pull-out drawers can reduce the need to seek and reach for items. These drawers conveniently roll out so items in the back can be accessed without disturbing foods in the front. Drawers can be custom built for any pantry space.

- **Make it accessible.** Think about who will be taking items from the pantry. Put children's snacks on the bottom pantry shelf where they can reach them, and then organize other shelves for adults in the home.

A pantry remodel can add valuable storage space and make one of the busiest rooms in the house operate more efficiently. © <https://mcg.metrocreativeconnection.com>

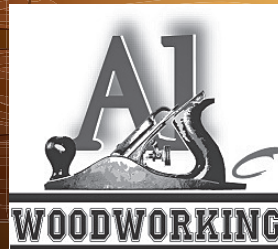


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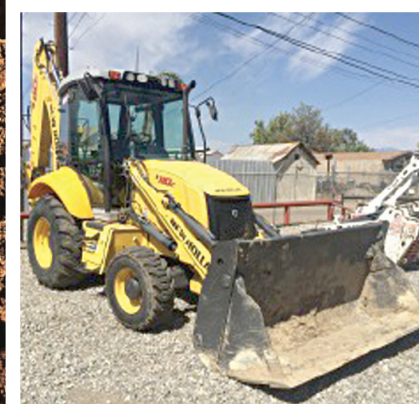


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From Traditional,



This home was custom designed with two main level master suites for single siblings to enjoy their upcoming retirement years. With 4,728 sq. ft. on two levels, there is plenty of space to spread out and enjoy the view of the backyard pond. Featuring custom cabinets from Dakota Kitchen and Bath in a spacious kitchen and a Kozy Heat fireplace, the main living space in an open floor plan is especially inviting. The large main level laundry and oversized walk in pantry make this home easy to plan to "age in place". This home also features a lower level, high-tech home office which seems to be the perfect design feature for a 2020 home.

to Contemporary...



This lake home was designed for generations to come. The open riser "floating" stairs were a central design feature and this contemporary vertical element ties all three levels of the home together. It also features a spacious main level master suite and open living, kitchen and dining room. There were many hours of thought put into the kitchen so it is especially functional for a busy family and their many guests to prepare

meals or plan snacks for a boat ride. The owner helped work on a custom designed range hood that suits their needs as well as their taste. Three ensuite bedroom / bathroom combinations and a bunkroom on the upper level allows the young adults in this family space to bring friends now and someday their own families. A fully finished basement has additional guest space.

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Transition Smoothly After Relocating

People move for various reasons. Some have outgrown their existing homes and need something bigger, while others move to downsize.

Regardless of why people move, moving occurs more often than you might think. The U.S. Census Bureau says one in nine people relocated in 2015 to a new neighborhood, a new state or even across the country. Relocating, whether it's around the corner or miles away, affects people's lives in many ways. A smooth transition to a new place involves understanding the process and getting the support necessary to make the move a success.

Research potential destinations

Give ample thought to where you might live before uprooting yourself and your family if you have one. The career resource Change Recruitment suggests using the internet as much as possible to learn about the location. Sites like Niche can paint a picture of an area, providing information regarding its demographics, points of interest, schools, and much more. However, an in-person visit will be needed to get a true feel for the neighborhood.

Understand the costs

Apart from the fees associated with buying a home, relocating involves hiring movers, unpacking belongings, temporary storage rentals, charges to turn on/off utilities, repairs for the new home, and several other expenses.

If you're moving because of a career opportunity, the company may contribute to some of the moving costs. Check with a human resources professional to determine if the company provides relocation compensation.

Get out and meet people

Use every opportunity to meet neighbors and people with shared interests. Attend community events and/or school functions. Some employers may have meet-and-greet events. Online services like Meetup list groups of like-minded people who may periodically meet up in your community. The sooner you make friends and acquaintances in your new town or city, the more likely you are to feel at home.

With some planning and a little assistance, relocating can go smoothly. © <https://mcg.metrocreativeconnection.com>



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Turn Your New House Into a Home

Historically low mortgage interest rates are helping to drive a new wave of home sales. Data from the U.S. Census Bureau indicates roughly 14 percent of the population, or around 40 million people, move every year for various reasons. Statistics Canada's Canadian Housing Survey found about half of Canadian households have either moved within the past five years or intend to do so within the next five.



While people may be inclined to move far from their current residences, the moving resource Move.org notes that some U.S. states are seeing an influx in people leaving while others are absorbing new residents. Illinois, Alaska, New Jersey, New York, and West Virginia are the top five states Americans are leaving, while Idaho, Nevada, Arizona, Oregon, and Montana are gaining residents.

People relocate for various reasons. After moving into a new house, it can take some effort to turn that house into a true home and feel comfortable in your new environs. These steps can help that process along.

• Create at least one complete and serene space. Focus on setting up the bedroom so you can retreat at the end of the day. Invest in new furniture or get new bedding to give the room this comforting feeling.

• Create an organizational plan. It can be tempting to want to throw everything in closets and unpack quickly, but give yourself time to fully analyze where you want to store items, where you may need to paint or reconfigure spaces, as well as any home improvements you want to make before taking out all of your stuff. When you fully unpack, you can immediately enjoy your hard work.

• Hang artwork. Hang a few select pieces of artwork or family photos shortly after moving in. Surround yourself with things that make you feel good.

• Bring mementos. Your first home may bring about warm feelings. While you can't recreate it entirely, you can use a piece of furniture or a few family heirlooms to make your new space feel homey.

• Rely on familiar scents. Break in the new space with familiar aromas, whether it's preferential air fresheners, scented candles or baking your favorite chocolate chip cookie recipe.

Moving into a new home can be exciting. Certain touches can help make the new space feel more like home. © <https://mcg.metrocreativeconnection.com>



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Pros and Cons to Pet Doors

Pets quickly take up residence in their owners' homes and hearts. Many pet parents treat their pets as full-fledged members of the family, with the same privileges and attention they devote to other family members.

A 2016 Harris Poll found 95 percent of Americans consider their pets to be part of the family, and there is not much they won't do for their companion animals. One area where pet owners may focus their attention is giving their pets more freedom to explore the outdoors. This can be achieved with the installation of a pet door. With busy schedules taking many pet parents away from home, pets may spend many hours home alone. An outdoor retreat could be just what the veterinarian ordered for pets who need more fresh air. Before pet owners install doors for their four-legged friends, it may behoove them to consider the advantages and disadvantages to doing so.



Pros - Pet doors can be very convenient for pet owners and pets. Unencumbered bathroom breaks is one of the prime reasons to get a pet door. Not having to wake up early in the morning or rush home from work to let out a pup can give pet owners more freedom. Cat owners may choose to have their cats soil outdoors, removing the hassle and odor of indoor litter boxes.

A pet door provides a way for pets to regulate when they need to go and not be at the mercy of their human companions. This is handy when training a puppy who cannot hold his bladder for more than a few hours. Avoiding indoor accidents can be a great reason to install a pet door.

Pets need exercise and stimulation to alleviate boredom and avoid destructive behaviors. Access to the outdoors promotes physical activity and mental stimulation. Cats may chase bugs or small animals. Dogs may run around the yard and play with a ball or stick. Easy access to outdoor play can take some of the burden off of busy pet owners.

Cons - As convenient as pet doors can be, they may disconnect pet owners from their pets. People may feel they don't need to spend the time in the yard or walking the animal, and that can adversely affect the bonds between pet owner and pet.

Another potential disadvantage concerns alpha-driven pets. Giving pets control over their comings and goings may reinforce ego and potentially cause the animal to be less responsive to his owner's commands.

Safety is another concern. Although there are smart doors that can only open when triggered by a chip on the pet's collar, one never knows what pets may bring indoors. Cats may present dead rodents and dogs may dirty the house with muddy paws.

Weather is another concern. In colder climates, pet doors may be another source of drafts, contributing to inefficient heating and cooling situations.

Dogs or cats who are prone to roaming could get into trouble if left to their own devices outside.

Pet owners should consider a host of factors before installing pet doors in their homes.

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EXPECT THE BEST...

Mat Hanson of Blue Water Prairie Landscaping completed a landscaping project for us that turned out better than we ever imagined. We had tried to come up with ideas for this project on our own for past couple of years. Mat worked with us and designed a project with so much character and charm. He stayed within budget, was very professional and had an excellent crew. Once the job was started they stayed until it was completed, and all final touches done. We have received so many compliments and have given his name to many people who are looking to have landscaping projects done. We look forward to working with him on other projects in the future. ~ Rog and Sue F.



Blue Water Prairie Landscape and Design provided support and assisted us in the entire design and build process of the landscape portion of our home renovation and remodel. Mat assisted us in using materials that were native to our property and maintaining the rural appeal of our property. He was able to incorporate our lifestyle and the desires we had for our outdoor space into a plan that became a reality. We appreciated the options that he made available to us with respect to materials and the importance he placed on quality. The crew at BWP worked efficiently and professionally and treated our home with respect during the build process. They had the right equipment for the work and finished on time. We certainly recommend BWP and would use them again. ~ Kyle

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How to Begin Building a Credit History

Credit scores play a significant role in the lives of millions of adults across the globe. A strong credit history can help people secure more borrower-friendly terms on home and auto loans, potentially saving them thousands of dollars.

Credit scores are not typically on the minds of young adults who are years away from purchasing their first homes. However, young adulthood is a great time to begin building a strong credit history. By laying a strong foundation now, young adults can reap significant rewards when they try to finance major purchases, such as cars and homes, down the road.



- **Open a credit account.** It's important to begin building credit histories once you're eligible, as young people with no credit histories may find it hard to get loans or even apartments of their own. Cosigners can help, but loans secured with cosigners won't do much to improve young people's credit scores. Borrowers want loan applicants who have shown they can pay their own bills, and length of credit history is one of many variables that are used to determine borrowers' credit scores. A long history that documents a young person's track record of paying bills on time is to his or her advantage. Many credit card companies issue credit to applicants as young as 18, so young people should not hesitate to begin exploring their options. The online financial resource NerdWallet notes that young people with no credit history may need to apply for secured credit cards. Unlike more traditional cards, secured cards are backed by upfront cash deposits. However, secured cardholders must still make payments on time and will still incur interest charges if they don't. These cards can be a great way for young people to begin showing lenders their creditworthiness.

- **Apply for an installment loan.** Installment loans are another great way for young people to build their credit histories. According to the credit reporting agency Experian, auto loans are among the easiest types of loans to obtain. Young borrowers may need cosigners, though some lenders may not require that. Young people who want to buy new vehicles can avoid leaning on their parents to facilitate their purchases and instead take out an auto loan that requires monthly payments. A track record of making installment loan payments on time and in full is a great way for young people to prove their creditworthiness and improve their credit scores.

- **Ask your landlord to help.** Young people who rent and pay their rent on time might finally be able to benefit from that. In the past, the only way rent payments were included on credit reports was if tenants were delinquent with their rent payments and subject to lawsuits or were reported to collection agencies. However, Experian recently started to include positive rental payment information in their credit reports. Young people with histories of making rent payments on time can ask their landlords to report their positive payment histories to the credit bureaus.

Strong credit histories can benefit adults from all walks of life. It's never too early for young adults to begin building their financial reputations. © <https://mcg.metrocreativeconnection.com>

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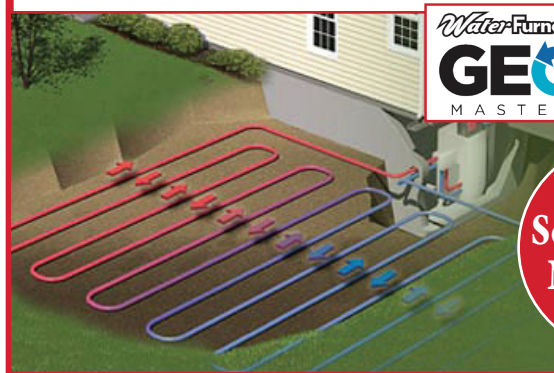


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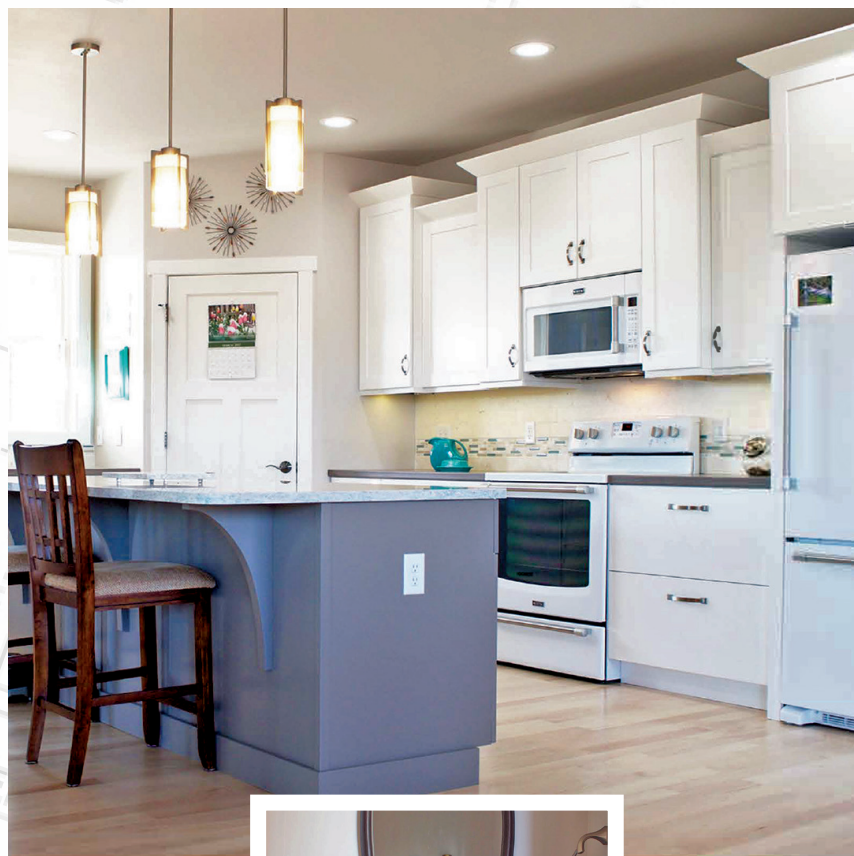


PARADE OF HOMES 2020

Welcome to this charming country home acreage situated on a hill overlooking a peaceful brook. This custom designed and built home by Borgen, Incorporated of Mountain Lake, MN is 3,614 square feet with a two car finished garage and a finished lower level. It was designed specifically to meet the retired owner's needs.

This delightful home greets you with a pergola awning on one side of the front stamped concrete patio, and a wood ceiling porch on the other side, with square columns and railings. Stepping through the Craftsman style front door, an airy open floor plan awaits you. The main level includes the Great Room, Dining Room, a Kitchen with an Island, a Master Suite, Laundry, half Bath and a Den that functions as a Sewing Room and Office. The finished lower level is home to three more Bedrooms, a Family Room, one Bath and storage. Beautiful hard wood Maple flooring in the main living area and large windows throughout the home are inviting features. With built-in seating under the large windows on both levels, it creates a perfect place for extra storage or seating.

Touches of coastal decor throughout the home compliment the crisp white Showplace Kitchen cabinetry and Cambria Island countertop. A back-lit recessed tray ceiling in the Great Room also enhances the peaceful ambiance of this home. Attractive LP Smart Siding is featured on the exterior. This home has been designed and built to meet or exceed energy efficiency standards.



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Outdoor Improvements That Boost Home Value

Whether home improvement projects are design to improve the interior or exterior of a house, focusing on renovations that make the most financial sense can benefit homeowners in the long run. The right renovations can be assets if and when homeowners decide to sell their homes.

So how does one get started? First and foremost, speak to a local real estate agent who is knowledgeable about trends in the community. While a swimming pool may be something coveted in one area, it may impede sales in another. It also helps to study generalized trends and data from various home improvement industry analysts to guide upcoming projects.



The following outdoor projects are just a few renovations that tend to add value.

- **Fire pit:** A fire pit is a great place to gather most months of the year. Bob Vila and CBS news report that a fire pit realizes a 78 percent return on investment, or ROI.
- **Outdoor kitchen:** Many buyers are looking to utilize their yards as an extension of interior living areas. Cooking, dining and even watching TV outdoors is increasingly popular. Outdoor living areas can be custom designed and built. In addition, prefabricated modular units that require a much smaller commitment of time and money are available.
- **Patio:** Homeowners who do not already have a patio will find that adding one can increase a home's value. Patios help a home look neat, add useable space and may help a home to sell quickly. The experts at Space Wise, a division of Extra Space Storage, say that refinishing, repairing and building a new patio offers strong ROI.
- **Deck:** Deck can be as valuable as patios. A deck is another outdoor space that can be used for entertaining, dining and more. Remodeling magazine's 2018 "Cost vs. Value" report indicates that an \$11,000 deck can add about \$9,000 in resale value to the home, recouping around 82 percent of the project's costs.
- **Door update:** Improve curb appeal with a new, high-end front door and garage doors. If that's too expensive, a good cleaning and new coat of paint can make an old door look brand new. These easy fixes can improve a home's look instantly.
- **New landscaping:** The National Association of Realtors says an outdoor makeover that includes well-thought out landscaping can net 105 percent ROI. Installing a walkway, adding stone planters, mulching, and planting shrubs are ideas to consider.

Many different outdoor projects can add value to a home. © <https://mcg.metrocreativeconnection.com>

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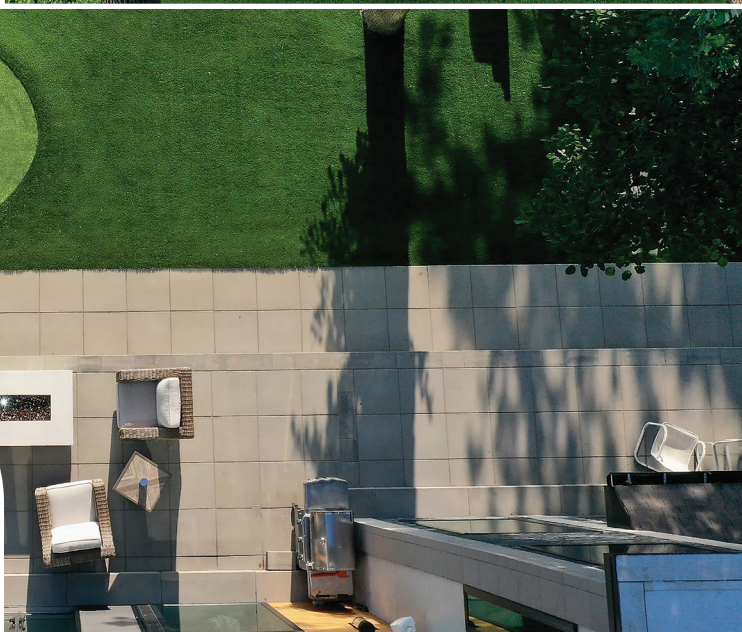


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How to Keep a Pet-Friendly Home Clean

Sixty-eight percent of American households, or about 85 million families, own a pet, according to the 2017-2018 National Pet Owners Survey conducted by the American Pet Products Association. Canada's Pet Wellness report indicates that approximately 35 percent of Canadian households have a dog, while 38 percent have a cat.



Dogs, cats and other companion animals can be wonderful to have around, breathing energy into a family. Despite all of the advantages pets can bring, they tend to be a little messy. However, that doesn't mean it's impossible to have a pet and maintain a clean home. Homeowners just need to take a few extra steps to help things along.

- **Manage pet fur.** One of the persistent issues pet parents face is fur. Grooming the pet regularly (preferably outdoors) will help tame some of its fur. Covering sofas and other places where pets like to lounge with an old sheet can contain some of the fur where it can be shaken off outdoors and laundered frequently.
 - **Upgrade your vacuum.** You'll need a vacuum with strong suction to pick up fur, dirt, dander, feathers, birdseed, and any of the other debris that can accumulate thanks to pets. A vacuum with a good brush action also can dig in deep to carpets and upholstery to really clean thoroughly, say the experts at House Beautiful.
 - **Pause for paws at the door.** Keep a small container of water by the front door. When returning from walks, dip the dog's paws into the water and dry before entering the house. This keeps dirt (and salt in the winter) from being a nuisance.
 - **Get the right cleanser.** Pet owners must contend with accidents. Look for an enzymatic cleanser that will treat stains and odors so that pets do not return to the soiled area again and again thinking this is an acceptable potty location, says Modern Dog magazine. Test an area of the carpet or floor being treated for colorfastness before applying. Address accidents promptly.
 - **Choose the right upholstery.** According to Martha Stewart Living, look for top-grain, semi-aniline leathers, as scratches are disguised on such pieces. In terms of fabric, microfiber or microsuede are better suited to pets because the fabric is tightly woven and may be more resistant to fur and soiling.
 - **Launder pet items.** Regularly wash bedding and other belongings that pets use. This will help tame indoor odors.
 - **Keep nails neat.** Clipping dog and cat and other small animals' nails may help avoid scratches on furniture and floors. If you do not feel comfortable doing it, take the animal to a groomer.
- Pet owners can keep their homes clean regardless of how much dirt their pets track into the house. © <https://mcg.metrocreativeconnection.com>

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| ✓ Baseboards, ceiling fans, light fixtures, AC vents | ✓ Vacuuming carpet and upholstery |
| ✓ Wiping of doors and frames | ✓ Mopping tile or wood floor |
| ✓ Dusting blinds | ✓ Carpet shampooing |
| ✓ Wiping window sills and railings | ✓ Interior RV cleaning (must have power & running water) |
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Holiday Hosting in Small Spaces

Gatherings of family and friends are a big part of the holiday season. Hosting such gatherings can be a great way to show loved ones how much you appreciate them, and hosting also saves hosts the trouble of traveling during one of the most hectic travel seasons of the year.

When hosting a large crowd at home, space can be a difficult hurdle to clear. However, a few helpful strategies can help space-starved hosts pull off a holiday soiree where everyone is comfortable.

- Pare down the menu. Holiday feasts don't have to resemble medieval banquets with excessive amounts of food and drink. Hosts with small kitchens and tiny dining quarters can pare down the menu, limiting offerings to just a single entree and a few simple side dishes, so everyone feels comfortable at the table and has ample room to eat. A small menu also gives hosts more time to spend with their loved ones during the festivities.

- Don't overdo it on drinks, either. When planning the drinks menu, avoid offering cocktails, which take time to prepare and often require guests to visit the kitchen for refrigerated ingredients. Limit drinks to wine, beer, water, and soft drinks, storing cold beverages in a cooler kept outside on a front or back porch or in an area outside the kitchen so cooks can work without interruption.

- Move some furniture. If your main living space is small, consider moving some bulky furniture into a bedroom or office where guests won't be spending time. Then make better use of the open living space by placing folding chairs or other accommodations to ensure there's ample seating for everyone. A single recliner can only be enjoyed by one person, but removing it from a room may create enough space for as many as three folding chairs.

- Go small on decorations. If you know you'll be hosting in advance of the holiday season, decorate with guests in mind. That might mean skipping a six-foot Christmas tree in favor of one that takes up less space. Avoid leaving any fragile decorations out, as adults or overexcited kids may knock them over as they try to navigate a cramped space.

Holiday hosting can be fun, even in small spaces. A few simple tricks can make even the smallest spaces accommodating. © <https://mcg.metrocreativeconnection.com>



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7 Ways to Start Getting Organized

Becoming more organized is a popular resolution each new year. However, like many resolutions, people’s commitment to being more organized tends to wane as February draws near.

Being unorganized can adversely affect productivity, state of mind, motivation, and even happiness. Sixty-seven percent of people surveyed in an Alpha Phi Quarterly study believed they could save up to 30 minutes a day if they were more organized. And a Huffington Post survey determined worrying a home isn’t clean enough or organized enough is the fifth most common stress trigger for Americans.

Getting and staying organized requires commitment. Having some handy tips at the ready to facilitate the process can make things go more smoothly.

1. Determine what organization means to you. Being organized might mean one thing to you and something else entirely to someone else. Some may put form before function. Others may be interested in the aesthetics of a neat-looking space. Once you have a handle on what being organized entails to you, you can get to work.
2. Start with what motivates you most. Perhaps this is a room in the home that has become overrun with clutter. Or maybe it’s getting finances organized so you can save for a dream vacation. When you accomplish your biggest goal, the seemingly smaller ones may seem less difficult.
3. Declutter your mind. Think of a busy mind as a computer that has that turning hourglass or spinning color wheel icon when it’s stuck on a process. Every application stalls because the computer cannot do everything at once. The same thing can happen in the brain. Sit down and make a to-do list of what’s on your mind. Then start prioritizing tasks. This will do wonders to clear your head.
4. Create deadlines for yourself. An open-ended timeline to get things done may promote procrastination. Deadlines may provide motivation.
5. Avoid distractions. Try to remove as many distractions as possible. When working on a chore, hire a babysitter to look after the children or step away from social media so you can focus on the task at hand. Interruptions only slow you down.
6. Think before you acquire. Once you are organized you may have challenges fitting new items into the mix. If you’re getting ready to purchase something new, carefully consider its usefulness and determine in advance where it will go, and whether or not you have the space.
7. Be accountable to another. Having help getting organized can mean delegating certain tasks or enlisting someone to check in with you to see if you’re on target. Embrace this system of checks and balances.

Becoming organized is a process, but once you get the hang of it, it can be easy to stay organized. © <https://mcg.metrocreativeconnection.com>



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Secrets to Making Your Home Look Like You Hired a Design Pro

Photo spreads in home design magazines can be awe-inspiring. Quite often homeowners wish they could lift the looks right off the pages of magazines and transform their own homes into picture-perfect retreats.

It takes an eye for design to pull a room together — even with inspiration — and make it both functional and attractive. While hiring an interior designer is one way to go, homeowners can use some of the tricks and techniques the designers employ to do a remarkably good job of improving the interiors of their homes without such help.

Embrace texture - The colors used in a home can add impact, but designers often utilize various textures to create aesthetic appeal. A single color scheme can be enhanced by various fabrics. Consider a leather sofa made more cozy with chenille pillows next to a rustic side table. Figure out ways to incorporate a few different textures to add depth to the room.

Be careful with color - Many high-end homes showcase neutral shades that are enhanced by pops of color. If you like a rich, royal purple, leave room for other colors as well. Add touches of purple in vases, throw pillows and other accessories.

Also, many designers work in shades of three for room colors. There may be one main color for walls, another color for larger accents, such as couches and chairs, and then a third color that pops in accessories such as flowers, pillows and collectibles. These can be any colors, but the most muted tends to be the more abundant shade.

Add a bit of bling - Glittery items and metallics can add a touch of luxury feel to any space. A shiny table lamp, mirrors, a sparkling chandelier, and the like are easy ways to produce a high-end feel. Reflective surfaces also will cast light around the room, giving the illusion of a larger space.

Choose a big statement piece - Many homeowners make the mistake of filling a room with several small pieces of furniture that only contribute to clutter. Instead, look for a statement piece, which can be a cabinet, armoire or chaise. Mix and match large and small elements for a sense of balance.

Accessorize - Finish the room with accessories and flowers. When placing and hanging knickknacks and wall art, odd-numbered groupings often look the most cohesive and interesting. Experiment with different scales and heights for even more dimension.

When inspiration hits, take some cues from interior design pros to make spaces look like they belong on the pages of your favorite magazines. © <https://mcg.metrocreativeconnection.com>






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The Value of Mulched Leaves

Homeowners who don't look forward to dusting off their rakes each fall might be happy to learn that mulching fallen leaves with a mower may be a healthier and less labor intensive way to confront a yard covered in leaves. For 20 years, turfgrass specialists at Michigan State University studied how lawns reacted to having ground up leaves left on the lawn and the results were overwhelmingly positive. Researchers found that tiny pieces of mulched leaves eventually sifted down through the turf and provided the lawn with essential nutrients. Mulched leaves also served to control future weed growth by covering up bare spots between turf plants. Such spots typically provided openings for weed seeds to germinate and ultimately infect lawns. In fact, researchers found that mulching leaves for just three years could produce a nearly 100 percent decrease in dandelion and crabgrass growth. Homeowners with mulching mowers that also have bags can even help their gardens by alternating using the mower with and without the bag on once leaves begin to fall. When mowing with the bag on, mulched leaves can then be used as mulch in landscape beds and vegetable gardens. © <https://mcg.metrocreativeconnection.com>

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7 Ways to Make Guests More Comfortable When Entertaining

Many people enjoy opening their homes to friends and family. Entertaining can include everything from backyard barbecues to hosting formal dinner parties to providing overnight accommodations. While each of those things is different, hosts always want to ensure their guests are as comfortable as possible, regardless of which style of gathering they're hosting.

Hosts can use these seven strategies to help guests feel at home.

1. Consider the details. Does your guest like chocolate covered almonds? Does he or she prefer a certain genre of music? Take note of the specific details that make the guest tick, and then incorporate them into your entertaining plans.

2. Ready the space. Not everyone has a full-fledged guest room, but that doesn't mean you can't create a welcoming and private retreat for guests. Turn a home office into an overnight area with a pull-out couch or even a dressed-up air mattress with high-quality linens.

3. Anticipate guests' needs. Think like a concierge when hosting at home. Have extra toothbrushes, antiperspirant, mouthwash, and a phone charger at the ready. Is your guest a reader? Keep a few selections nearby or a book of puzzles so they can stay busy during their downtime.

4. Keep dietary needs in mind. Guests have different palates and preferences, but some may have serious food allergies as well. Ask in advance if any guests have food allergies so you can ensure that any meals served are not just delicious, but also safe and healthy.

5. Keep pets at bay. Guests may not be as enamored with pets as their hosts. If you know a guest has an allergy or an aversion to pets, keep the animals away as much as possible.

6. Freshen the home. Take inventory of your home in its current state and make some minor improvements. Add some interior lighting, clean the bathrooms, create some extra seating, and freshen up with some flowers to make for a welcoming environment.

7. Prepare a special meal. Give guests a sensational meal they're not likely to forget. This can mean indulging a little with sourced ingredients, home cooking and a good bottle of wine.

Comfort should always be a priority when readying a home for guests. © <https://mcg.me-trocreativeconnection.com>

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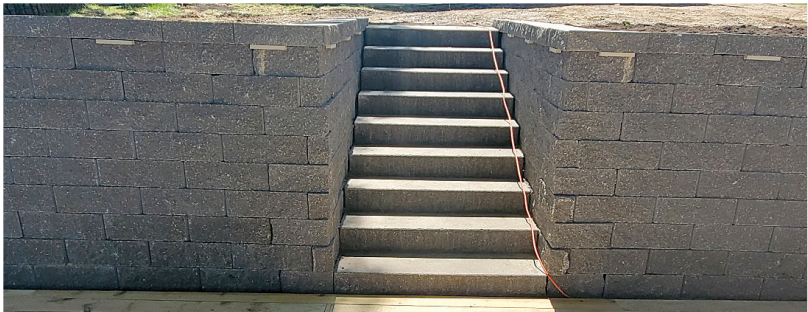
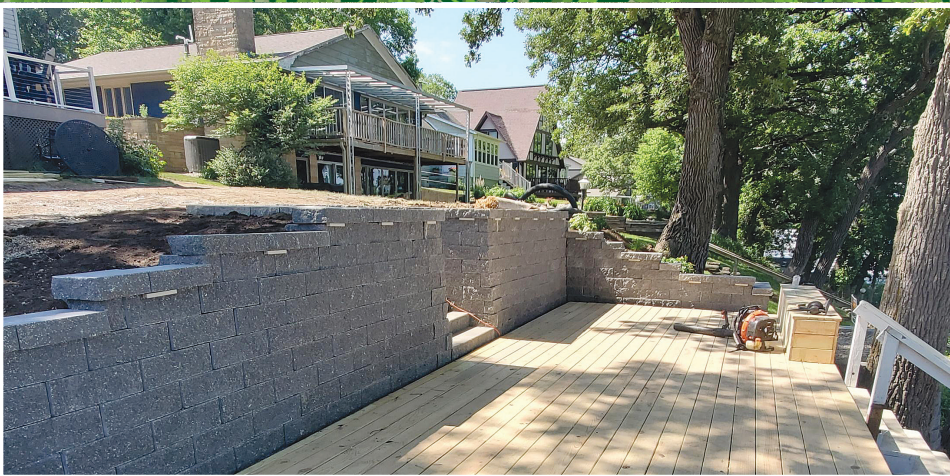
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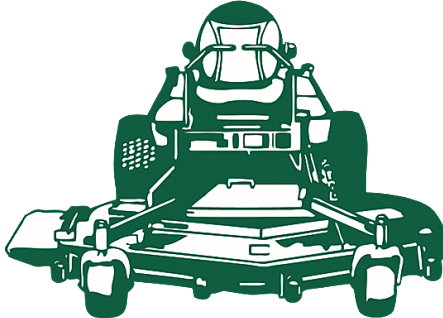
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5 Tips to Prepare for Window Replacement

Winter is coming, and for millions of people who reside in areas of the country that see the mercury drop considerably between December and March, that means prioritizing staying warm. Inefficient or aging housing materials may compromise your ability to do just that.

Drafts from doors, poorly protected attics and basements and aging windows may force heating systems to work extra hard to maintain interior temperatures.

Replacing old windows can make a home quieter by blocking out exterior noises. Consumer Reports also notes that new windows are often easier to clean and maintain than older varieties.

Many homeowners are interested in replacing their windows, but may not know where to start. These guidelines can help the process along.

1. Get several estimates. Ask for recommendations from neighbors or other people in your area on which companies they used to install their replacement windows. When you interview the prospects, ask several questions about how they go about installing the windows. Questions can include:

- How long will the project take?
- Will I need to remain home during the process?
- Do you discard old debris?
- What is the protocol for installation during inclement weather?

2. Research permits. Most home renovation projects need to be approved by the local municipality. Go to the permit office and find out the requirements. Some window contractors will include securing permits in the cost of the project. After the project is completed, an inspector will come by and ensure the work was done according to code.

3. Change up the appearance. Look at the type of hardware you have around the home and other fixtures. Choose windows that have locks or latches that can match those features for continuity of style. Think about choosing a different style or frame color of the window, or a different type of window to improve efficiency and function.

4. Research top window manufacturers. It's tempting to purchase windows based on price alone, but replacement windows are often a decision that only has to be made once or twice for the life of the home. Invest in durable windows that will have staying power. Consumer Reports offers unbiased reviews on various window brands and can help homeowners make sound decisions.

5. Prepare for installation. Clear pathways, remove window treatments and disconnect window alarm systems. Plan for one to two days of installation, advises Andersen Windows and Doors. Keep pets and children away from work areas.

Replacement windows can be a smart investment. New windows can improve the look of a home, reduce heating costs and can keep interior spaces comfortable. © <https://mcg.metrocreativeconnection.com>



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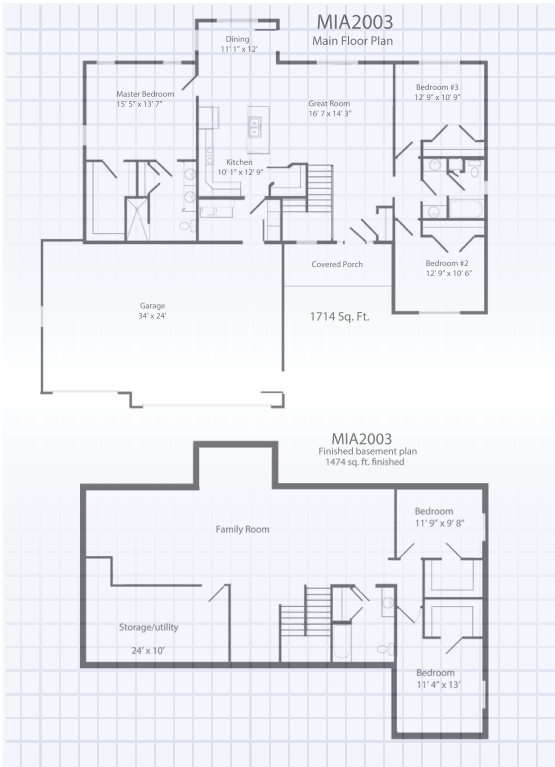
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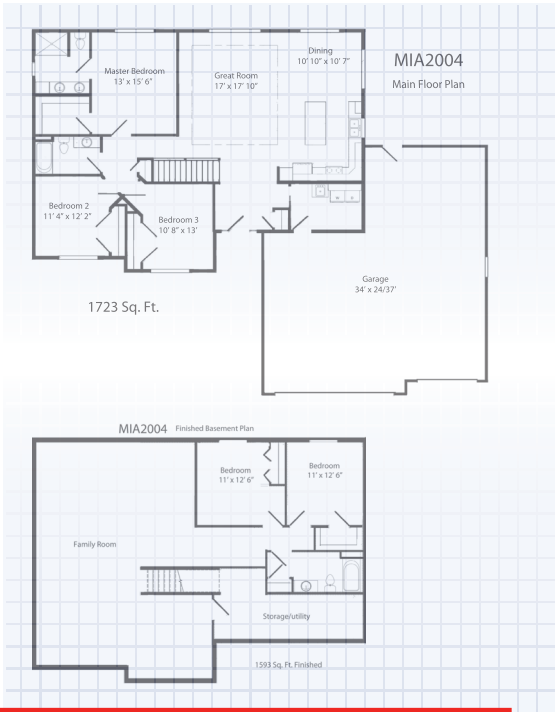




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Signs of Overloaded Circuits in Your Home

The National Fire Protection Association says that home fires caused by electrical failures or malfunction result in more than 400 deaths per year and cause \$1.4 billion in property damage annually. Electrical fires can often be prevented, especially if homeowners learn to identify the signs of overloaded circuits. The Electrical Safety Foundation International notes that the following are some common signs of overloaded circuits.

- Flickering, blinking or dimming lights
- Warm or discolored wall plates
- Burning odor coming from receptacles or wall switches
- Frequently tripped circuit breakers or blown fuses
- Cracking, sizzling or buzzing from receptacles
- Mild shock or tingle from appliances, receptacles or switches

The Consumer Product Safety Commission estimates that 50 percent of electrical fires can be prevented by arc fault circuit interrupters, or AFCIs. AFCIs are products that are designed to detect a wide range of arcing electrical faults in an attempt to reduce instances in which electrical systems are ignition sources of fire. Arcing is very dangerous and occurs when an electric current flows through the air between two conductors. When these currents flow through unintended paths, the result is high intensity heat that can ignite surrounding material, such as wood framing or insulation. AFCIs monitor circuits for normal or dangerous arcing conditions, serving as something of a safety net that can reduce the risk of home fires. Recognizing the signs of overloaded circuits and using AFCIs can help homeowners significantly reduce the risk of home fires in their homes. More information about electrical fires and how to prevent them is available at www.esfi.org and www.afcिसafety.org. © <https://mcg.metrocreativeconnection.com>



7 Things to Consider When Buying a Shed

Backyard sheds can be useful assets. Sheds can create storage space in the garage, basement or other areas of the house that have become gathering spots for gear typically used outdoors. Sheds are ideal for housing mowers, tools and even pool-care equipment. But they can be put to other uses as well, such as being key spots to engage in hobbies or even as a child's clubhouse.

Various factors should be considered before building or buying a shed. A storage shed can be a significant investment. Once placed, sheds may remain in their dedicated spots for years to come. That means careful thought should go into the planning process.

1. Check your local building codes first. Before you accumulate building materials or order a shed, be sure to know the ins and outs of shed codes. The codes may impact the shed's placement, construction, the materials used, size, and numerous other factors. It's much easier to amend plans beforehand than to face the hassle and expense after learning you did things incorrectly.

2. Choose placement wisely. Spend several days assessing the yard and thinking about the uses for the shed. If you plan to store pool floats and chemicals inside of the shed, it should be located close enough to the pool to be convenient. Look at the lay of the land. If there is a soggy patch of land that can turn swampy under the shed's foundation, that is a poor location choice. If you need access to electricity, placing it far away from the house could necessitate running expensive wiring.

3. Consider the design. Just because a shed is for storage doesn't mean aesthetics should be overlooked. Choose a shed style that complements your home. You may also want to match certain architectural features, like arched doorways or dormers. Design also may relate to practicality. For instance, storing a riding mower inside may necessitate dual doors that open widely.

4. Invest in quality materials. Spending a little more and using quality materials can ensure it lasts long enough to be cost-effective. The right materials will be resistant to splitting, cracking, decay, and insect damage.

5. Prepare the site well. A proper foundation for the shed is almost as important as the shed itself. You cannot just drop the shed on the lawn and leave it, as the shed can sink or structural issues may arise if it is placed on a weak base.

6. Blend into the environment. Surround the shed with shrubs or plants so that it blends into the yard and complements the space.

7. Deck out the interior. Use every storage tool at your disposal to maximize floor, wall and even rafter space for storage. Plan where items will be kept and customize the storage options around those locations.

Sheds can be an asset and improve storage capability in the backyard.

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Introducing the New Extension of the Discovery House - **The Daniel House**

When Discovery House purchased the Daniel House in 2017, the previous owner had plans to redo the upstairs and had it down to bare walls. Discovery house saw the potential to add more rooms which meant the possibility to help more people.

Daniel House is a sober house for residents who have lived at Discovery House for six months and are not quite ready to live on their own. With a capacity of seven residents, individuals sign a one-year lease at Daniel House. They may renew their lease as long as they comply with expectations. Individuals have a private room and share common areas with other tenants.

The Home Builders Association took on the project in 2017 since we were already in the beginning stages of planning a garage makeover before they purchased the new home. Bryan Barga, with Barga, Inc., became foreman of the project due to his extensive work with Habitat for Humanity. Then, between all of the Home Builder Association members and even beyond our members and into the community, people started donating either time, material, or funds.

We completed the project in the Spring of 2020. The home now has the ability to house seven, however, due to COVID-19 the home currently has three residents. We are so thankful to all our members and local businesses who helped us complete this project so the Discovery House can continue to serve our community so graciously and help even more people!

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Laundry Room Renovations You'll Love

Does it seem like your hamper is always full and the washing machine is running constantly? You may not be imagining it. Laundry Butler for You, a wash, dry and fold service, says the average household washes 50 pounds of laundry a week and 6,000 articles of clothing every year. Families with children at home are doing laundry most often, and those with pets may find there is ample laundry to wash as well.

With so much laundry being generated, homeowners may want to consider paying extra attention to the space in the house where their clothing is being cleansed. Laundry room renovations may not top homeowners' priority lists, but it may be time to give these rooms another look.

Assess your equipment - If your appliances are aging, a laundry room renovation can start with an investment in new appliances. New models have large capacity loads, tend to be energy-efficient and could have innovative features that help fit with your laundry lifestyle. Purchasing front-loading models also can free up design space, as you can install a counter directly above the units, saving room for other items like drying racks.

Figure out your room needs - A laundry room need not be limited to laundry only. Many homeowners make large laundry rooms catch-all spaces that can serve as utility or mud rooms, pantry overflows, or off-season storage areas. Consider the functions you want the room to serve and include those ideas in your designs.

Add some natural light - If possible, include a window in your laundry room. Natural light can help make the room more enjoyable. It also can help you identify stains on clothes that need to be addressed and make it easier to fold matching items like socks.

Think about a utility sink - Many washing machines drain out directly to waste pipes in the floor or wall, but you also can opt to have them empty into a utility sink. This sink also provides a convenient place to handwash items, clean tools or paintbrushes, or store items that perhaps you do not want to bring into a bathroom or kitchen sink.

Include some flair - This utilitarian space need not be boring or bereft of design elements. Mirror your home's style in the laundry room, and include wall hangings, plants, accent items, and even task lighting. Play up certain features with a bold floor tile or brightly colored walls.

Updating laundry rooms can be a great way to make doing laundry more enjoyable and efficient. © <https://mcg.metrocreativeconnection.com>



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