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Volume 22, Issue 11

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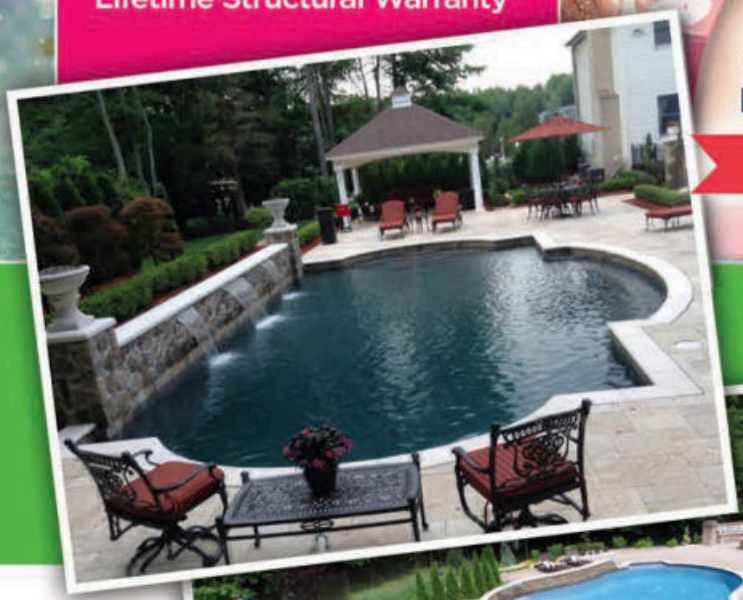
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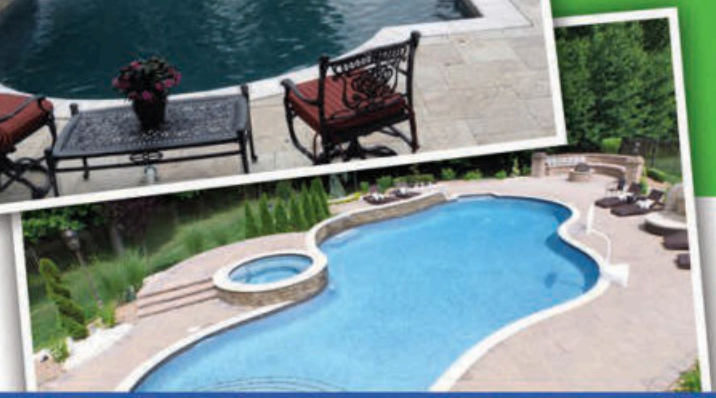
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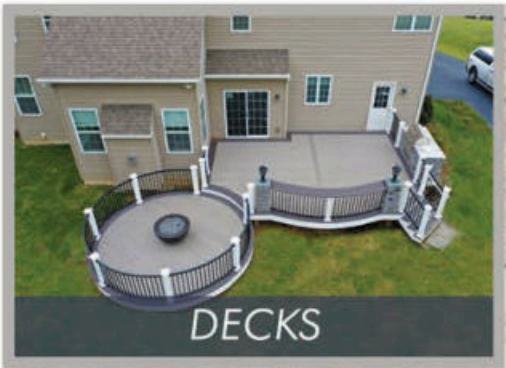
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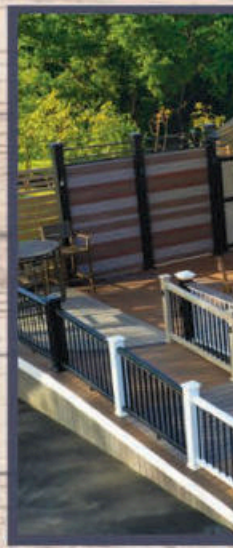
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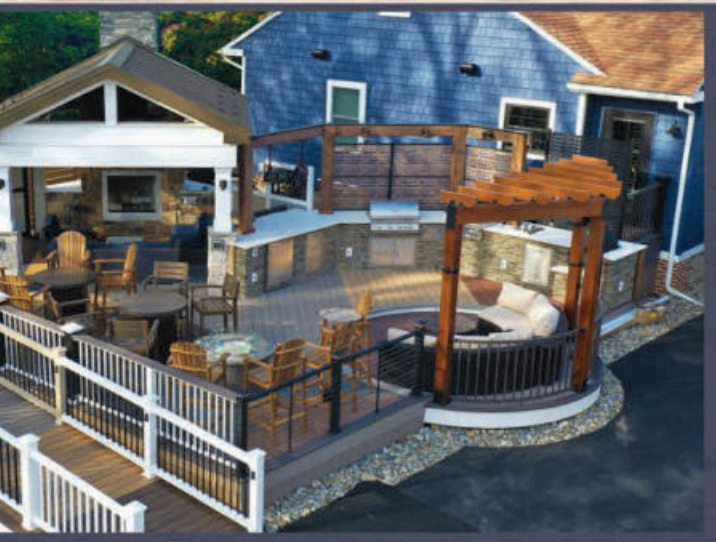
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SINCE OPENING ITS DOORS IN 2019, STAFFA STONE HAS BEEN A TRUSTED RESOURCE TO HOMEOWNERS TO HELP PROVIDE A WIDE RANGE OF QUALITY LANDSCAPING PRODUCTS, INCLUDING NATURAL AND MANUFACTURED STONE, PAVERS, CONCRETE AND MORE FOR ANY OUTDOOR DESIGN PROJECT THEY MAY BE CONSIDERING.

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Owner and CEO Kyle Staffa brings over 26 years of industry experience in the landscape and masonry supply business. With his extensive knowledge, *House & Home* magazine spoke with Staffa to learn more about the products and services that make up Staffa Stone.



Owner and CEO Kyle Staffa

FOR DIFFERENT PROJECTS, WHAT TYPES OF MATERIALS DO YOU RECOMMEND?

There are many different types of pavers we at Staffa Stone sell. However, we can offer customers a wide variety of materials depending on their applications. A great example of this is Unilock Umbriano. This product is a solar reflective paver and is also pre-sealed. That allows for a great pool and outdoor kitchen area.

WHAT MAKES STAFFA STONE STAND OUT FROM OTHER COMPANIES?

The best thing that helps Staffa Stone separate ourselves from the other competition is our sales team. We are all experienced in the field with the products. So, we know how to help answer questions on what products are best suited for certain applications.

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Our showroom here in Bayville displays all the different pavers and wall stones that Unilock has to offer. We show a wide range of materials used for many different applications from outdoor kitchen areas, pool decks and driveways.





HOW HAVE STYLES CHANGED AND MODERNIZED, AND WHAT ARE THE LATEST TRENDS CLIENTS ARE LEANING TOWARD NOWADAYS?

I have been in this industry for a long time and have seen many different trends in the market. Today the color trends seem to be anything in the gray family. As far as style is concerned, designers seem to be specifying larger format pavers. There are a few styles in the Unilock line that allow us to supply what the client is looking for.

HOW HANDS-ON ARE YOU WHEN WORKING WITH CLIENTS?

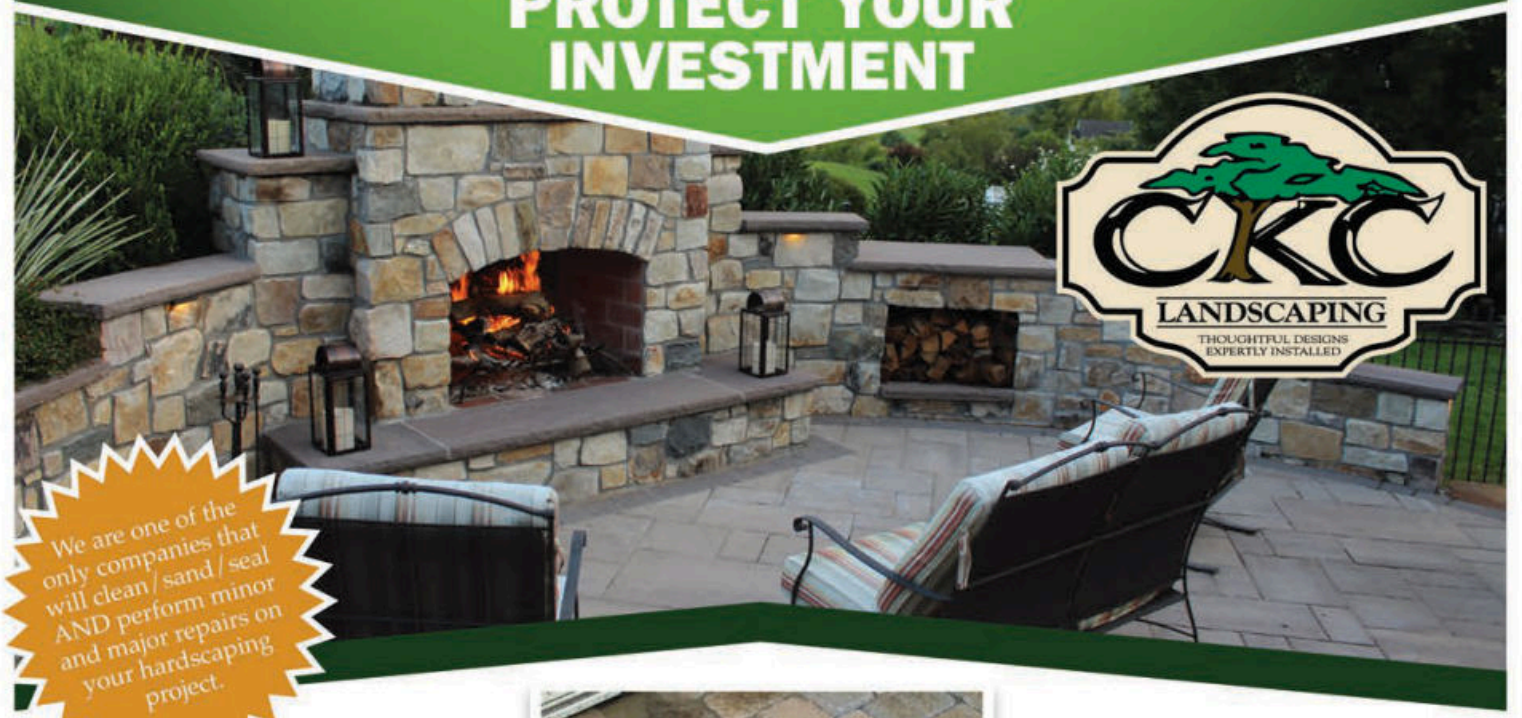
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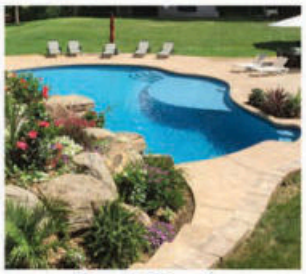
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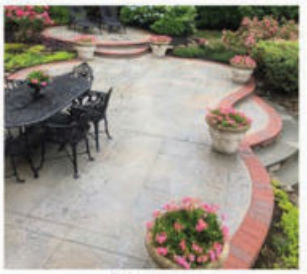
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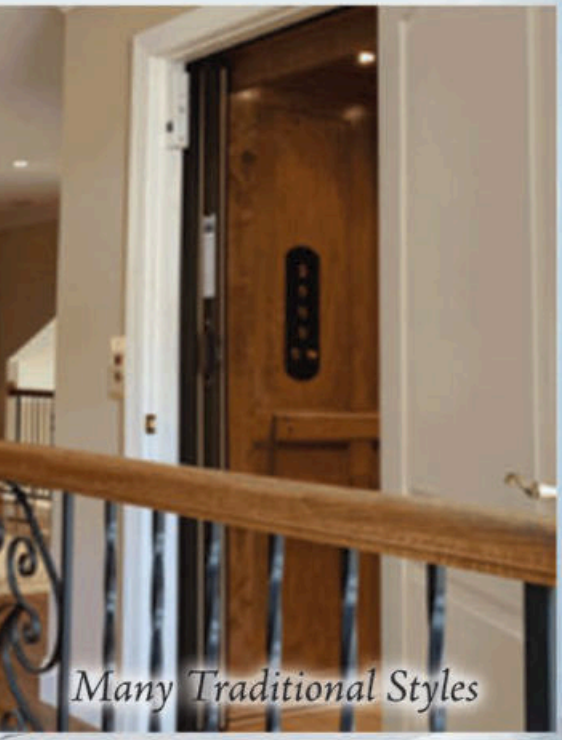
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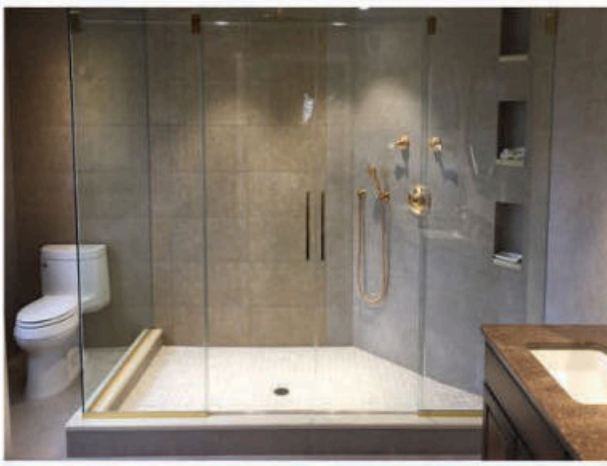
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H&H OUTDOORS

From decks to patios, porches to gazebos, it's easy to bring beauty and functionality to a backyard space with help from the pros.

BY KRISTEN DOWD

The Great Outdoors

SPENDING EXPONENTIALLY MORE TIME within the confines of your own home became the norm when a global pandemic rocked the status quo nearly two-and-a-half years ago, and all that extra time lengthened many home improvement to-do lists.

Your spare bedroom became a chic home office. That wallpaper accent wall was finally installed in the den. Your kitchen has shiny new appliances (not to mention a shiny new floor), and that dream bathroom renovation turned into a bathroom reality.

Now, it's time to take things outside.

"We are all home a little bit—or a lot—more these days," says Diane Marrazzo, the outdoor environmental designer at Marrazzo's North River Landscape, Hardscape & Rainwater Harvesting Inc. "Spending time in the natural environment your home property offers is pleasant on one's mind, especially if it's well kept."

Backyards have become sanctuaries of sorts since COVID-19 came on the scene (remember the early days of stay-at-home orders?), and whether yours is a blank canvas or just needs some updating, local contractors and designers are here to help.

"During COVID, many clients came to their Shore homes, and as they were sheltering in place, they chose to upgrade their systems and services," says Neil Wiessler, president of Shore Sound & Cinema. "Outdoor living is now a major line item in our proposals. Clients want to enjoy the same quality of life outdoors as they do indoors."

WHERE TO BEGIN

"If it has to do with outdoor living, we're a part of it. That's all we do," says Joe Kalnas, general manager of My Deck. "We're here to serve our clients with the best solutions possible when they're looking for an outdoor space. We research out the best materials for them, show them product and then walk them through the whole process."

My Deck includes clients from the first step to the last, and it all starts at the company's showroom in New Jersey. This makes everything a simple process, Kalnas explains, since clients can actually see, touch and feel materials to make their selections. The design team then creates a 3D rendering which can be adjusted by the click of a button.

"When they leave here they are educated on best building practices, have an idea of what materials they like, and have an idea of what we can do design-wise," says Kalnas.

Of course, plenty of people have the desire to revamp the backyard, but they come up short on ideas. That's no reason to stress—professionals are happy to help clients figure out exactly what they want and what their space needs.

"This is where we shine," says Joe Oakes, owner and president of First State Building & Design. "Because we are a full-service design and build company, we help people who know they want a change but can't quite articulate the specifics and we can step in from the start to bring their vision together straight through to completion of their project."

According to Tom Grimes, owner of T E Grimes Construction, homeowners sometimes do not realize what's available to upgrade their space. Trying to figure it out on their own can be overwhelming.

"I can pull different elements together as far as the initial layout and design, using what's popular and what's cost effective," Grimes says.

WHAT'S ON TREND

"A lot of people, when they look at their space, they start to look at the borders around the house. They look at the perimeter first and gauge their space, and then they fill it in," Grimes says.

This keeps fencing a popular choice, but the contractor has also seen the popularity of outdoor walls grow in recent years. The walls can be made with different metals, masonry products—the options, Grimes says, are robust.

"There are so many different materials and ways they are assembled. Even if it's just for an architectural detail, maybe something that picks up an element of the house so it looks like it belonged there all the while," Grimes says.

Marrazzo agrees that privacy is on trend for outdoor living spaces, seeing more and more clients who want to incorporate a bit of solitude into their landscape.

"That is definitely because we are home more than we have been," Marrazzo says.

It's nice to unplug in the great outdoors, but when enjoying your own backyard, you don't have to be disconnected from technology. Just ask Wiessler.

"We offer outdoor weatherproof TVs, outdoor audio, outdoor lighting and outdoor Wi-Fi so clients can control everything from a simple-to-use app off their phones," he says.

For the folks at My Deck, they try to stay on top of trends in the realm of materials, but when it comes to designs, creating something one-of-a-kind goes a long way.

"We're always showing new stuff. We try to keep everything fresh and when you're looking at products and ways of doing things, we're always trying to create something that's unique for a client. It's creating a space that's designed for them," says Kalnas. "We're trying to be cutting edge with materials and doing different things and creating spaces."

As a "bona-fide full-service, premier design and build company" that designs, remodels and builds basic to full-blown outdoor living spaces, trends are in the forefront of what First State Building & Design does.

Lighting, fire features and outdoor heating elements—which are currently very popular, according to Oakes—take outdoor projects "to the next level." Outdoor cooking—incorporating grills, countertops and outdoor kitchens into designs—has also grown in popularity.

"One of the current popular trends' homeowners gravitate toward are building roof overhangs to their deck or patio to add some privacy and protection and extend the seasonal usage of outdoor-living spaces," Oakes adds.

FUNCTION FIRST

When it comes to functionality, Kalnas puts it best.

"If it's not functional, then why build it?" he asks. "There are all different ways of designing. We try to look at functionality as almost No. 1."

What's functional is going to look different for every family. For instance, an existing space may have

three different levels, but family members may have a tough time walking and navigating stairs.

"To be able to create something on a one-level platform might make sense for them. It's designing something that works for them specifically," Kalnas says.

Wiessler says it's easy to spend someone's money, but the goal at Shore Sound & Cinema is to make things easy to use.

"We want our clients to have fun with our systems. We absolutely love seeing their smiles when we've completed their outdoor wonderland," Wiessler says.

And according to Oakes, beauty and function go hand-in-hand.

"Any space can look 'pretty,' but functionality is what takes it to a whole new level," he says. "To make it a good investment and have true value to the homeowner, it has to not only look good, but it also has to serve the homeowner well in its purpose with regard to functionality."

This functionality also comes into play with a feature Grimes says has grown in popularity in recent years: heating elements in walkways. These can be part of a brand new walkway or patio, or they can be retrofitted to existing structures. Triggered by sensors, it eliminates snow and ice worries during the colder months, which certainly serves a great purpose.

OUTDOOR PARADISE

Investing in your outdoor environment is also investing in your future.

"The biggest benefit of this kind of investment in adding comfort and style to an outdoor space is it will boom your house's resale value," Oakes says.

Second, he adds, is the benefit of maximizing the utility of the outdoor space. "Whether you have a large or small outdoor space, ideally you want to get as much out of it as possible, so adding anything like a deck or patio is just a fantastic way to increase both the utility and value of your home," Oakes says. "Another added benefit is a healthy one in that it helps the homeowners spend more time enjoying their own outdoor area.

"Fresh air and some vitamin D does homeowners good."

Another thing that does a homeowner good? Sanity, which, according to Marrazzo, is the best benefit to outdoor upgrades. Marrazzo's company offers creative landscape and hardscape design for all spaces, including lighting, sound systems, drainage solutions, water features and Amish-made custom pergolas, pavilions and cabanas. Incorporating these elements to create a beautiful space year-round is calming.

"It's driving up to a well-manicured property that has blooming interest in the spring and summer, has fall seasonal change interest, and yet also winter interest when dormancy sets in," she explains.

And whether your soul strives for the simplicity of drinks on a streamlined deck with muted lighting, dancing across a heated patio to music drifting from hidden speakers, or gathering around a fire pit roasting marshmallows with loved ones, it's all just a phone call away.

"Anything that you can pretty much imagine is available now," Kalnas says. "It's just a matter of putting it all together." H&H

RESOURCES

First State Building & Design
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Marrazzo's North River
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House & Home magazine spoke with Cerami to touch on the important aspects that homeowners need to consider when researching and planning for a new kitchen remodel.



David Cerami, Owner

COMMITMENT

It comes back to the individual homeowner and their commitment to that particular home. In other words, let's say you're a homeowner that moves every three to four years, do you really want to invest ... and to what extent?

Depending on your commitment to your home, depending on the details that are important to you would depend on how you would go about selecting the right design/build contractor for the job.

EXPERIENCED TEAM

Experience does count. I tend to recommend trying to do research to find accredited, certified design/build specialists that are in line with your aesthetic values, how you prefer to work, and your commitment to your home.

The nice thing in dealing with a design/build company is that you hopefully find a firm that not only understands the design and the homeowner's needs after discussing the different options, but understands the most cost-effective way to execute the design.

A true experienced design/build contractor or designer will save you exponentially so much more money and time in the end. Because these things are thought about upfront, they're addressed upfront, and they're made consistent with visual drawings and representations that make a homeowner much more validated about moving a project in that direction. If these details aren't articulated, what you wind up with is a series of "one step forward two steps back," with a lot of finger-pointing that ultimately results in a disjointed project and a bad experience.



PLANNING

There is a starting place: Any homeowner should talk and interview 2-3 experienced, accredited design/build professionals and make a decision after that. Look at the website, in-house talent and consumer ratings, and make sure they align with your aesthetic and practical needs.

We offer every customer a complimentary on-site visit to visually look at this space and have a very candid conversation with the homeowners regarding what their goals and objectives are.

We're there to give them constructive feedback relative to their goals. We ask, how long do you plan on staying in the home? How many children live in the home? Do you like to cook? How do you like to entertain ... and how often?

BUDGETING

One of the things that we ask is whether or not if there is an ideal budget range that you'd like to stay with. Now, my experience is to use that budget range as a foundation in which to develop a project. Understanding what your needs are and correlating that into some kind of range would set the stage for what we could or could not do.

Budgets are very important, but we also want the benefit of preparing a design offering that is beyond the obvious to a certain extent, for consideration that would give them a whole laundry list of added advantages and let them make their decision. "You don't know what you don't know."

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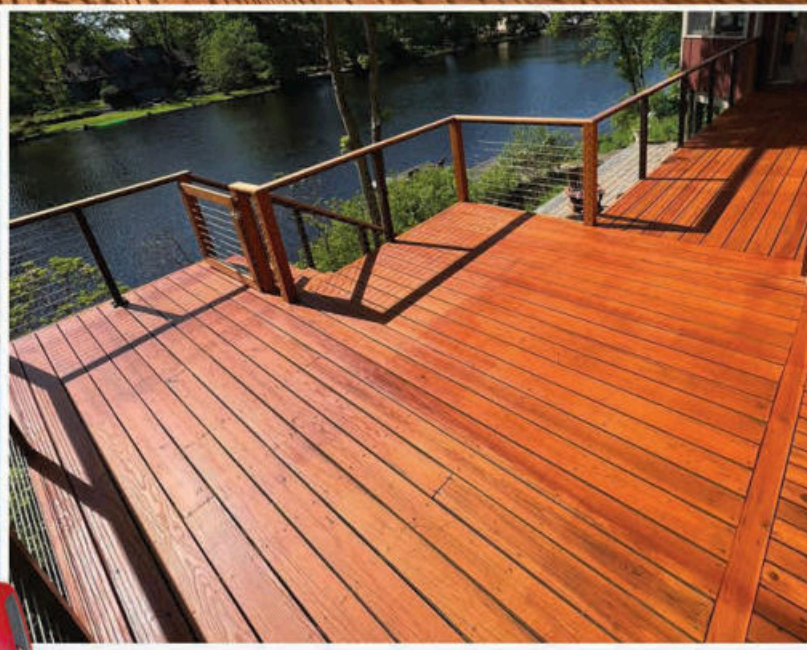
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Flooring it

From hardwood to luxury vinyl and more, homeowners have plenty of flooring options to fit their needs and budget.

by **Matt Cosentino**



When most people dream about renovating their homes, their minds automatically drift to the exciting aspects of the project, whether it's the cabinetry and countertops in a kitchen, the vanity and enlarged shower in a master bathroom or the bold new paint colors in a living room. One piece of the remodel that might get overlooked at first—but is of critical importance, no matter what the space—is the type of flooring to choose.

Flooring options have advanced dramatically over the years, and a wide variety of selections are now available to fit varying budgets and lifestyles. An update to one room or an entire level of a home can make a world of difference, even on its own without an accompanying renovation.

"People are definitely home more [since the pandemic started in 2020] and it's been very busy with projects," says Julie Ward, showroom manager and design consultant at Renaissance Ceramic Tile & Floor. "Updating the flooring, whether it's the whole floor or just a bathroom floor, brings your house back to life. With many different flooring options and colors, it has a big impact."

House & Home spoke to local experts to learn more about the different options and the pros and cons to each.

Finding the best fit

To help customers determine the type of flooring that will best suit their needs, industry professionals first try to find out as much about their lifestyle as possible.

"The first question we ask is how active is their household? Do they have children or pets? Do they entertain a lot?" says John Schwendiman, flooring general manager at Bucks County Wholesale. "Once we get those answers, then we can steer them in the right direction."

Yasu Yamauchi, owner of Yasu Floors LLC, offers several different types of flooring and will make recommendations based on his experience.

"It depends on the situation in the house," he says. "Last week we did a house where I proposed vinyl because the [homeowner] had a pool and he comes into the house wet. When water comes into play, hardwood is not a good option. It all depends on the client. I try to see what the client likes and sell them whatever they want."

Dennis Gehman, president of Gehman Design Remodeling, first asks if the flooring is for one particular space or multiple rooms. Before making his suggestions, he also needs to understand the budget the homeowner is working with.

"Most people would love to do real hardwood everywhere and/or real tile," he says, "but that can be crazy expensive."

Options upon options

As Gehman notes, hardwood is still a popular choice for those who can afford it. Yamauchi is often tasked with reviving hardwood floors, perhaps if a customer has purchased an older home where the original flooring had faded.

"A lot of people are looking for sanding and refinishing their floors," he says. "This week I already did a 60-year-old hardwood that was under carpet and we brought it back to life. But sometimes it can just be two or three years old and the client doesn't like the color anymore and wants to change it."

Gilmar Marcelino, co-owner of Victorian Floor Finishing, says homeowners can customize the color of their hardwoods. While grays are popular now, the classics are still around: walnut, dark walnut, ebony. "We can mix and blend colors to create any color the customer is looking to do," he says.

Refinishing a hardwood floor is a days-long process, however. Marcelino says homeowners usually opt to do this when they first move into a home and before the furniture is in, or when they are undergoing other renovations and things have already been moved out of the space.

For a 4,000-square-foot home, Marcelino says to expect refinishing to take three to four days. "The first day, the crew sands the floor and applies the first coat of stain. On the second day, we buff the floor to make it very clean and apply the next coat," he says. The number of coats is dependent upon the homeowner's choice of water- or oil-based stain. Oil only allows one coat per day; water can be two coats, one in the morning and one in the afternoon.

"Oil-based lasts longer, which is good for families with children or pets, but it leaves a smell on the house that can take a few days to dissipate. In New York state, oil-based is not allowed," he continues. "Water-based stains are free of smell and are the most popular choice these days. Nine out of 10 jobs, the customer is choosing water-based."

Once the floor is finished, Marcelino highly recommends putting felt padding on all furniture legs before moving it back into the room.

In homes where young children and pets are present, however, hardwood might not be the best selection, regardless of price. Those clients need something that is easier to clean and maintain.

"A strong material these days is luxury vinyl, whether that's luxury vinyl plank, which looks like a wood board, or luxury vinyl tile, which obviously looks

Photographs courtesy of Renaissance Ceramic Tile & Floor





H&H INTERIORS

like tile," Gehman says. "That will be a fraction of the cost of real hardwood or real tile and the durability is definitely there for general wear and tear as well as with animals."

"A lot of people now are going with the luxury vinyl products just because it's cleanable, water-resistant and scratch-resistant," Schwendiman agrees. "For families with pets and kids and active lives, it holds up a lot better than the hardwood. With hardwood, you get a better return on your investment than vinyl, but it's not as durable."

Manufacturers continue to take the luxury vinyl planks to a new level, mimicking the look of wood without the hassles. Sometimes even the pros have a hard time noting the difference between vinyl and real hardwood.

"The image that they're printing on these tiles is incredible," Ward says. "Every time something new comes in, it almost feels like wood grain or like you could get a splinter from it even. It's hard to tell what's real and what's fake anymore."

Yamauchi opines that laminate flooring resembles real hardwood even more than vinyl, although there are drawbacks.

"The vinyl is waterproof on top, waterproof at the bottom, it is slip-proof and it doesn't scratch," he says. "If you drop water on top, it just stays there and doesn't go under, so you can just wipe it off. Laminate consists of recyclable wood pretty much, so it absorbs water. Water goes in and the laminate expands. I don't do a lot of laminate, unless the client is going to take care of it and really likes the way it looks. It looks way more like wood than vinyl, but when it comes to water it's not good."

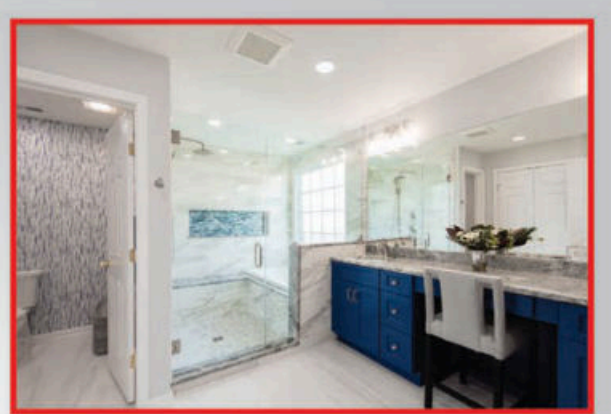
Schwendiman believes that laminate manufacturers are addressing the water issues recently, and it does have the advantage of being much more affordable than vinyl.

Ward's company sells a lot of porcelain tile as well, which is also a strong option for cleaning purposes. Natural stone requires more maintenance but is popular for kitchens or master baths.

Carpet is still used, mainly in bedrooms, offices or a finished basement, but Schwendiman says homeowners with allergies are getting away



> "For aging in place or ADA compliance, smooth, hard flooring is the best."
>
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from it since it traps dust and hard surfaces are easier to clean. Gehman also points out that carpet can be a tripping hazard for seniors.

"For aging in place or ADA compliance, smooth, hard flooring is the best," he says. "People talk about slipperiness and that's a consideration, but by code and actually by law, flooring materials need to meet a certain slip resistance qualification before they can go out to market. The most common [falls] are in a bathroom where it's a little wet or just inside a door where you're coming in from outside. There are some that are better than others but all must meet a minimum qualification."

Trends and popular colors

One major theme in recent years is to keep the same flooring throughout an entire level of the home, rather than, for example, using carpet in the living room, hardwood in the kitchen and tile in the bathroom.

"People don't want to break up the rooms, they want that open feel," Schwendiman says. "So they'll continue the flooring throughout the whole first floor or second floor instead of breaking it up. Some people still opt to put ceramic in the wet areas like kitchens, bathrooms and laundry rooms in case there is a leak. But the luxury vinyl can withstand all of that wetness."

"Consistency is a big thing with a house," Ward adds. "If you can run your floors all the same, it's going to make it feel bigger and more consistent versus having all these different floors throughout the home."

As for color, Ward says neutrals are always a big request, such as whites, grays and taupe. Gehman sees the wood tones coming on strong, but the trends always seem to change quickly.

"Gray is still in high demand with beige coming in second," Schwendiman says. "In the hardwood arena, it's the white oak natural or real light colors and wide planks. Next year it will probably be dark again. Very few manufacturers have actual colors like blue or red or green, they're all one form or another of gray or beige."

No matter what colors or styles customers think they want, Schwendiman advises them to visit a showroom and get a feel for the options in person as opposed to on a website. He has been in the business for 30 years now and even he is constantly amazed at what is out there.

"It was all carpet and hardwood when I started," he says. "Sheet vinyl was on its way out when I started, then laminate came into play, and now luxury vinyl has taken over a big chunk of the market share. But laminate and carpet are making their way back. You have to keep the ratio of what people want in the store. People don't use sheet vinyl anymore, so we only have one display of that compared to 15 or 20 displays of luxury vinyl. People should definitely come in and see the samples." **H&H**

RESOURCES

Bucks County Wholesale
Langhorne, Pa.
(267) 358-5247
BucksCountyWholesale.com

Gehman Design Remodeling
Harleysville, Pa.
(215) 513-0300
GehmanRemodeling.com

Renaissance Ceramic Tile & Floor
Horsham, Pa.
(215) 674-4848
CeramicTileAndMarble.com

Victorian Flooring Finishing, Inc.
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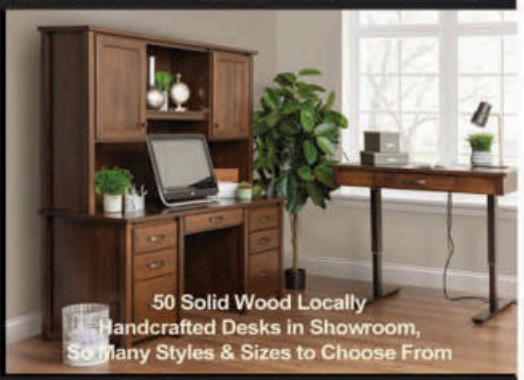
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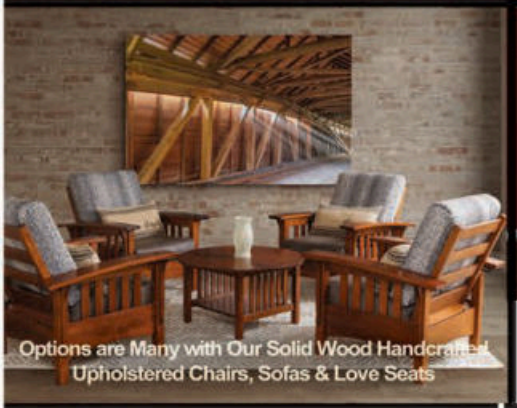
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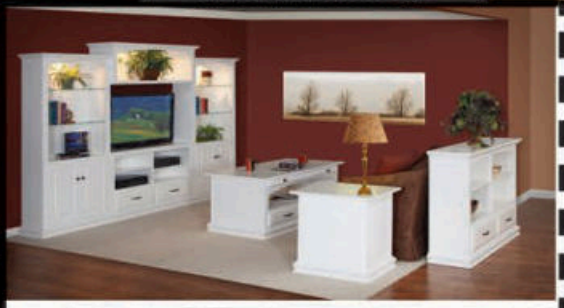

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One in a Million

Gehman Design Remodeling lends unique solutions to home-improvement projects one might consider less than straightforward.

By Bill Donahue

NO HOME IS EVER PERFECT. Even if a family customizes a newly built home according to their precise wants and needs, eventually their lifestyle and preferences will change.

"Our job is to help people imagine the possibilities," says Dennis D. Gehman, MCR, the founder of Gehman Design Remodeling in Harleysville. "When we're talking about what's possible, people will say, 'You can do that?' The answer is always, 'Yes.' It will require time and money, but almost anything is possible."

To his point, Gehman's firm often faces remodeling projects that are less than straightforward. While every home renovation is unique, Gehman describes three of the most common problems his team handles, with potential solutions to each one.

PROBLEM 1:

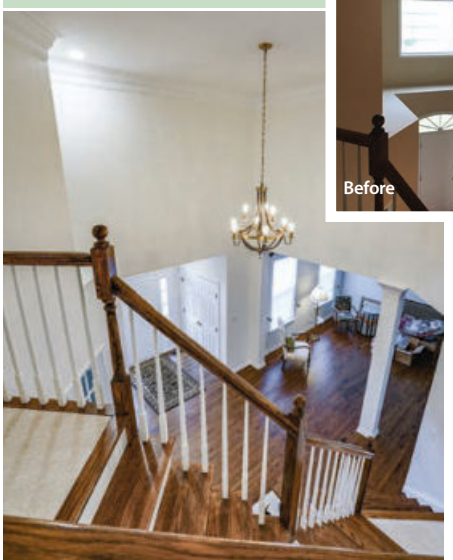
"The kitchen has too many doors."

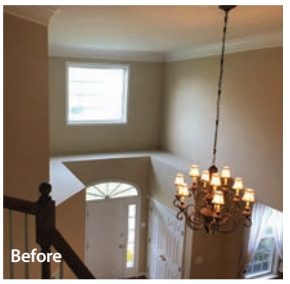
Today, most homeowners prefer an open floor plan, with living spaces that are not so well defined. Homes built in the 1970s or before, however, tend to have walled-off kitchens with multiple points of ingress and egress.

"People don't want to feel like they're on top of each other in the kitchen," he says. "We might suggest removing walls to create more of an open floor plan and give people room to mill about. We could also wall some of the doorways off so there are fewer points of entry."

In some cases, he might even recommend moving the kitchen to another part of the home.

"Moving the kitchen to what used to be the formal dining room, for example, might make for a better overall workflow," he says. "If we did that, we would have to consider everything the move would entail—the foundation, the electrical, the plumbing and any load-bearing walls that would be impacted—but it might be better suited to people's habits and lifestyle."





These before and after images show a project in which Gehman Design Remodeling used a two-story foyer to create a guest bathroom on the home's second floor.

PROBLEM 2:

"We need more room."

The pandemic forced homeowners to spend more time at home, making some reconsider their living spaces. While many homeowners instinctively lean toward an addition to create more space, Gehman says zoning issues and other factors can make an addition unfeasible.

"That's when we start having conversations about how often they use certain parts of the home, like their formal living room and dining room," he says. "Maybe the dining room can make way for an expanded kitchen, or we can make room by reconfiguring their bedrooms and walk-in closets. There's a lot you can do without building onto your house."

He cites a recent project at a home in Lehigh County, part of which involved digging out a basement beneath the kitchen to provide space for a woodworking shop. As an added benefit, the basement has helped to keep the kitchen floor—and the entire kitchen—much warmer during the winter months. The craftsmanship, scope and difficulty of the job netted Gehman's firm a Regional Contractor of the Year award (in the "Residential Interior, $100,000 to $250,000" subcategory) from NARI, the National Association of the Remodeling Industry.

"It's not necessarily cheap to do something like adding a basement, but it's probably as cost effective as an addition," he says. "The existing foundation and the makeup of the house itself come into play with a decision like that. As opposed to a stone structure, a house with a wood-frame structure is easier to put a basement beneath, partly because it's lighter to hold up."

PROBLEM 3:

"We need another bedroom."

Finishing an attic or basement, or building a room above a two-story foyer, would address this issue, but some homes require more creative options. Gehman recently started the design process for a twin home in Ambler, in which his firm will create a new bedroom by carving space out of a spacious main bedroom and sitting area.

"If you're thinking of creating a bedroom out of an attic, you have to look at the attic layout and the roof structure," Gehman says. "Does it have traditional joists and rafters? Does it have finished steps or pulldown stairs? If it has pulldown stairs, you're going to need to put in finished steps, so where will they come down? The solution depends on the composition of the house and the needs of the people who live there."

The past few years have been quite busy for Gehman's firm. He does not expect the work to slow down any time soon, even with the rising costs of fuel, labor and materials.

"People seek us out because we provide solutions to problems," Gehman says. "If people have been thinking about something for years and can't think of a good solution, it's time to give us a call." H&H

Gehman Design Remodeling

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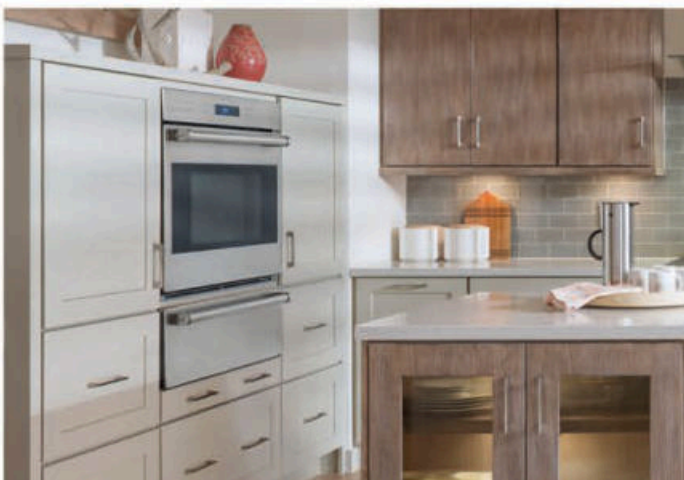
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We spoke with Wiessler about how things have changed in recent years, what clients are looking for these days when it comes to outfitting their homes with the latest smart technology, and to find out more about the latest trends in the industry.



Neil Wiessler, president

WHAT'S BEEN THE BIGGEST DEMAND FROM CUSTOMERS SINCE THE ONSET OF THE PANDEMIC?

Rock-solid internet and Wi-Fi (both indoors and outdoors) became the biggest demand for us. Many of our clients' internet technologies had become dated and outmoded, and with more and more people under one roof, the demands for high-performance networking became critical. Clients began running their businesses remotely and their children became virtual students and began learning remotely. Most networks needed to be upgraded outright or replaced to support multiple Zoom calls, large file transfers and secure virtual private networks to connect securely to their offices.

HOW CAN PEOPLE TURN THEIR BACKYARD INTO AN EXTENSION OF THE INSIDE OF THE HOME?

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IS IT TRUE THAT YOU ALSO PROVIDE REMOTE ACCESS SUPPORT? HOW BENEFICIAL IS THAT FOR CLIENTS?

With all this technology, there sometimes comes the need for support. Like our clients adapting to Zoom calls and virtual meetings, we adapted to remote access support and troubleshooting. With OvrC [pronounced Over See] and Parasol, these two technologies allow us to remotely diagnose and repair issues, sometimes before the clients even knew they had a problem. H&H


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Memorable Makeovers

Upgrades that make a guest bathroom unforgettable

BY AMANDA HAMM HENGEL



Renovations are inevitable when it comes to home ownership. Whether you've lived in your home for two years or 20, chances are, there's an update you think could make your home the house of your dreams.

For the majority of homeowners, kitchens, master bedrooms and bathrooms are at the top of the renovation priority list. They are both the center of the home and a homeowner's sanctuary, so it's no wonder they take precedence.

Perhaps further down the list, but some would argue just as important, are guest bathrooms. They can be, after all, one of the most frequently used bathrooms in the home.

"Every home is designed differently and has different features, but there tends to be a utilitarian bath in most where the kids and everyone who comes into the house can go in," says Dave Cerami, president of HomeTech Renovations. "Some homes have a guest bath within a separate bedroom. Either way, these rooms are high-use rooms or they're rooms people want to provide a nice experience for."

When looking to renovate, there are a number of options to consider, from bold, unique colors and accessories to really give guests an experience they won't forget, to neutral, soft colors that are timeless and can easily be incorporated into any style. Whatever your goal is, our experts share their thoughts and experiences to make the renovation experience that much easier.

Go Bold

Renovating your guest bathroom so that it stands out and creates a truly unique experience can start with color and move to more elaborate amenities, says Lorraine Sterl, office manager for Sterl Kitchens.



Photo courtesy of Sterl Kitchens/opposite page photo courtesy of HomeTech Renovations

Opting for a floating vanity in a blue, green or gray, and adding a ramp sink creates a statement piece that is eye-catching and functional, she says.

Scott Kingsland, president of Glass Castle, adds going beyond distinctive wall paint will also elevate the room.

"Nice tile work with extensive designs and a low-iron (ultra-clear) glass on the shower enclosure really makes a room stand out," he says.

An eye-catching hanging light fixture or even a unique shelving system are other ways to make the room pop and catch the guest's eye.

Going a completely new route from the design of the rest of the house is also a possibility, says Dan Dilworth, president of Dilworth's Custom Design.

"One of our basement projects was set up like a pub with a full bar," he says. "The bathroom is what you would see at a pub—including a urinal."

In other words, the sky is the limit when

Memorable Makeovers

it comes to creating a bathroom experience your guests will always remember, and going the safe route isn't always necessary.

Keep It Simple

Of course, a more neutral color palate and overall experience is also an option. Homeowners who prefer to be able to easily refresh areas without having to make huge changes may feel more comfortable with neutrals, says Dilworth.

"Try not to follow trends too closely since it's a less-used bathroom that would not be remodeled again," he says. "Keep the colors of everything neutral so it can be decorated or walls repainted to give it a fresh look."

Recessed lighting can give clean lines and more visibility, but sconces are also a timeless way to add light and character without being too bold in an otherwise neutral room.

Cerami says grays and whites are popular in bathroom remodels right now, as well as natural wood tones and furniture-style vanities.

"Replacing the builder-grade materials that are in the bathroom with things that are a little more upscale can really make a difference in the room," he says. "Adding tile floors, better lighting and ventilation are all updates that can be made."

As been noted previously, it may feel as though a renovation needs to include drastic changes, but subtlety can go a long way in making a bathroom stand the test of time.

Overall Updates

Whether you're electing to go big or prefer to keep things modest, Kingsland says homeowners are making more room for bathrooms overall.

"Ten years ago, the average shower enclosure was four feet," he says. "Now, the average enclosure is five feet and usually incorporates a 90-degree return panel [shower enclosure]."

Toilets have also come a long way, with many of them now fully skirted, hid-





Photos courtesy of Sterl Kitchens

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ing the s-trap at the back, says Cerami.

"It offers a clean, molded side to make them look more custom," he notes.

Additionally, while it may be enticing to add a toilet with special functions or a shower system with unique knobs, keeping things mainstream is probably best.

"Make sure everything is easy to use," Dilworth says. "A complicated shower system may make a guest nervous."

Safety and overall accessibility should also be well-thought-out, concludes Sterl.

"Consider barrier-free bathrooms for mobility or accessibility issues, wheelchair access, etc.," she says. "Incorporating discreet grab bars into the design of bathrooms for lifelong safety is also something to think about."H&H

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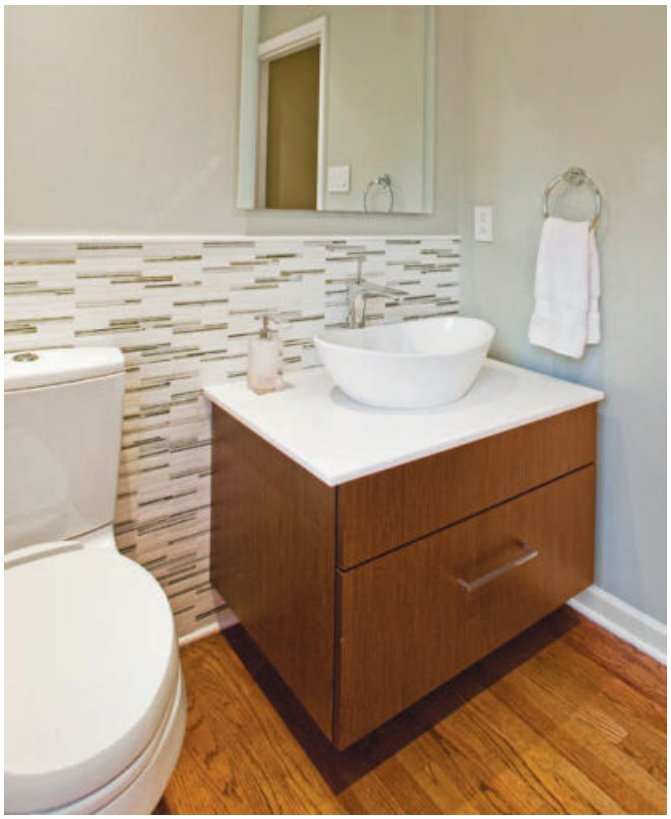


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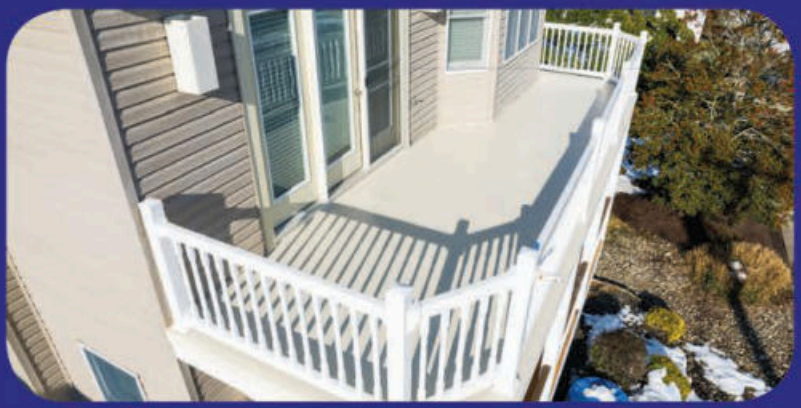
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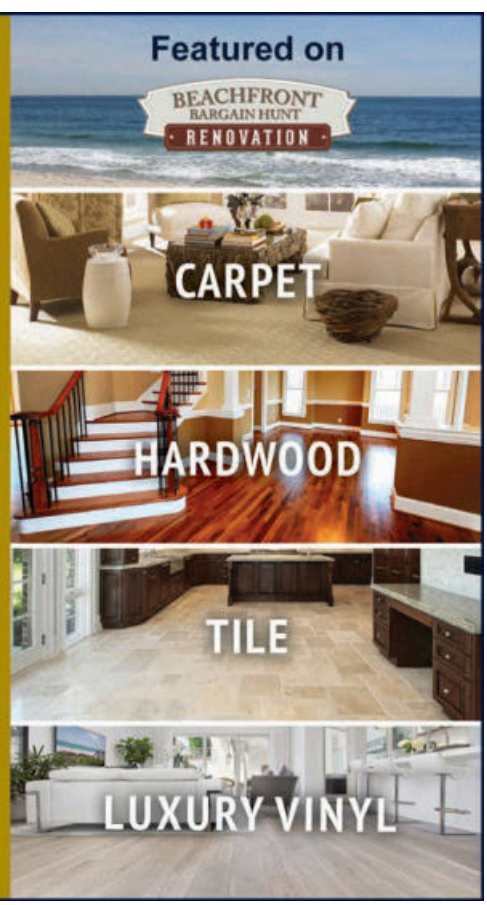
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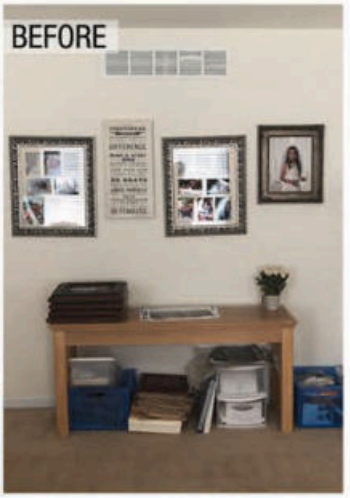
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