

The Wayne Herald
September 21, 2023



**YOUR GUIDE
TO FALL HOME
IMPROVEMENT**

The most likely spots where mold will grow in a home

Mold is a type of fungi that is found both indoors and outdoors. When mold grows inside, the health of people who spend time in the home or business where it grows can be in jeopardy.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, moldy environments may cause stuffy nose, wheezing, red or itchy eyes, and even skin conditions. The Institute of Medicine reports there is sufficient evidence to link indoor exposure to mold with asthma symptoms, as well

as hypersensitivity pneumonitis in certain individuals. Certain molds are toxigenic, meaning they can produce toxins, says the CDC. Though there are very few reports of toxigenic molds found inside homes, when present, they can cause rare health conditions.

No one wants mold in their homes, as it is not only unhealthy, but also unsightly. The Environmental Protection Agency says there is no practical way to eliminate all mold and mold spores in an indoor envi-



ronment. Certain rooms and spaces warrant careful inspection since they are more vulnerable to mold growth. Mold spores take root in areas where there is ample moisture. Controlling moisture indoors is key to controlling mold. Here are some mold-vulnerable spots that merit some extra attention on the part of homeowners.

Bathrooms

Bathrooms generate a lot of moisture through showering and bathing. Bathrooms need to be vented to the outdoors with an exhaust fan. If there is no fan, one should be installed. If that is not possible, open a bathroom window to air out the room after bathing. Wipe down surfaces in the bathroom to dry them and keep mold at a minimum.

Laundry area

Clothes dryers are moisture-generating appliances that should be properly exhausted to the outdoors. Homeowners also should make sure that washing machines and utility

sinks are working properly and there are no leaks that can cause mold growth behind or underneath the structures.

Kitchen

Mold also may grow in kitchens. Look under the sink and by the dishwasher for any leaks and areas susceptible to mold. Ventilating cooking areas can help reduce moisture in the area as well, says the CDC.

Basement

Homeowners who have basements or crawl spaces could be breeding mold down there unknowingly, particularly if the areas are unfinished. Moisture, warmth and darkness are prime conditions for mold growth. A dehumidifier can be utilized in the basement to help reduce the moisture saturation in this space. Also, check for leaky pipes or windows that may contribute to mold growth. Humidity levels in a home should be kept between 30 and 50% to help limit mold formation.

Attic

Although an attic may not be a spot homeowners frequent regularly, it is a good idea to get up there and look for potential mold problems. According to the North Carolina Department of Health, in the winter when buildings are heated, mold often grows in cold, uninsulated exterior walls where building surfaces are relatively cold compared to the indoors. Attics without proper insulation could be vulnerable to mold growth. Roofs also may be compromised by weather, causing leaks into the attic.

Mold can be found anywhere in a home, but is more likely to grow in certain spaces.

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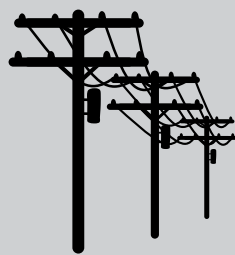
Check the condition of cords and power tools before using them. Repair or replace worn or damaged cords & tools.



Never use water or blower extensions to clean gutters near electric lines. Contact a professional maintenance contractor.



Be careful when working near power lines attached to your house. Keep equipment and yourself at least 10 feet from lines.



Look up and around you. Always know the location of power lines, especially when using long metal tools like ladders, pool skimmers, and pruning poles.

If it's raining or the ground is wet, don't use electric power or yard tools. Keep electric equipment at least 10 feet from wet areas.



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The many benefits of houseplants

The lines between the outdoors and indoors are being blurred. Homeowners build extensive outdoor living spaces so they can relax on weather-resistant furniture and even cook in lavish kitchens in their backyards. In addition,

works by bringing in oxygen and releasing carbon dioxide. Plants do the opposite during photosynthesis. They absorb carbon dioxide and then release oxygen. Plants can put much more oxygen into the air, improving

ers and paints.

Improve interior atmosphere:

Prevention magazine says plants can be used to screen unattractive areas, moderate room temperature by shading spots from the sun and even reduce noise. Plants also can improve ambiance and create a pleasing atmosphere in a room.

Can improve mood:

Growing and caring for plants can alleviate everyday stress. A nationwide study from UK Magazine Gardeners

World found 80% of gardeners declared themselves satisfied with life compared to 67% among non-gardeners. Gardeners were more positive mentally. Greenery can help people feel more at home and improve mental health. A rehab center in Norway found patients reported a greater increase in well-being four weeks after having greenery added to their surroundings.

Houseplants can improve indoor areas and positively affect personal health.



tion, indoor three-season rooms full of bright, open windows that showcase outdoor vistas challenge the boundaries between outside and inside.

For those working with limited budgets, there are some easy, inexpensive ways to enjoy the majesty of natural landscapes indoors. Houseplants can be used to improve indoor spaces, and they also provide various health benefits.

Help with allergies:

According to WebMD, rooms with houseplants tend to have less dust and mold in them than those without any foliage. Leaves and other parts of the plants serve as natural filters, catching airborne particles and allergens. Plants with textured leaves might be especially effective at trapping particles.

Put more oxygen into the air:

The human respiratory system

indoor conditions.

Increase indoor humidity and reduce illness:

Studies from the Agricultural University of Norway found that indoor plants can increase humidity in indoor spaces, which decreases the incidences of sore throats, dry coughs, dry skin and the common cold. Higher absolute humidity can decrease the chances of survival and transmission of the flu virus.

Filter the air:

Researchers who presented their work at the 252nd National Meeting & Exposition of the American Chemical Society found certain houseplants can combat the potentially harmful effects of volatile organic compounds. Plants may help filter out VOCs like benzene, acetone and formaldehyde, which can enter indoor air via cleaning supplies, dry-cleaned clothes, furniture, print-



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New apartments underway over former rugby field

A total of 288 bedrooms will make up apartments featuring one, two and three bedroom units, according to City Administrator, Wes Blecke. One apartment building (left photo) is fully up and undergoing interior work. Shown on the right, the bones of another apartments complex have gone up. The company heading the project, R. Perry Construction, operates out of Sioux City, Iowa. In

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addition to the apartment buildings, the new build will also include garages (pictured center) and a club house. The club house (not pictured) has finished construction except the addition of a pool for resident use. This project will continue well into next year.



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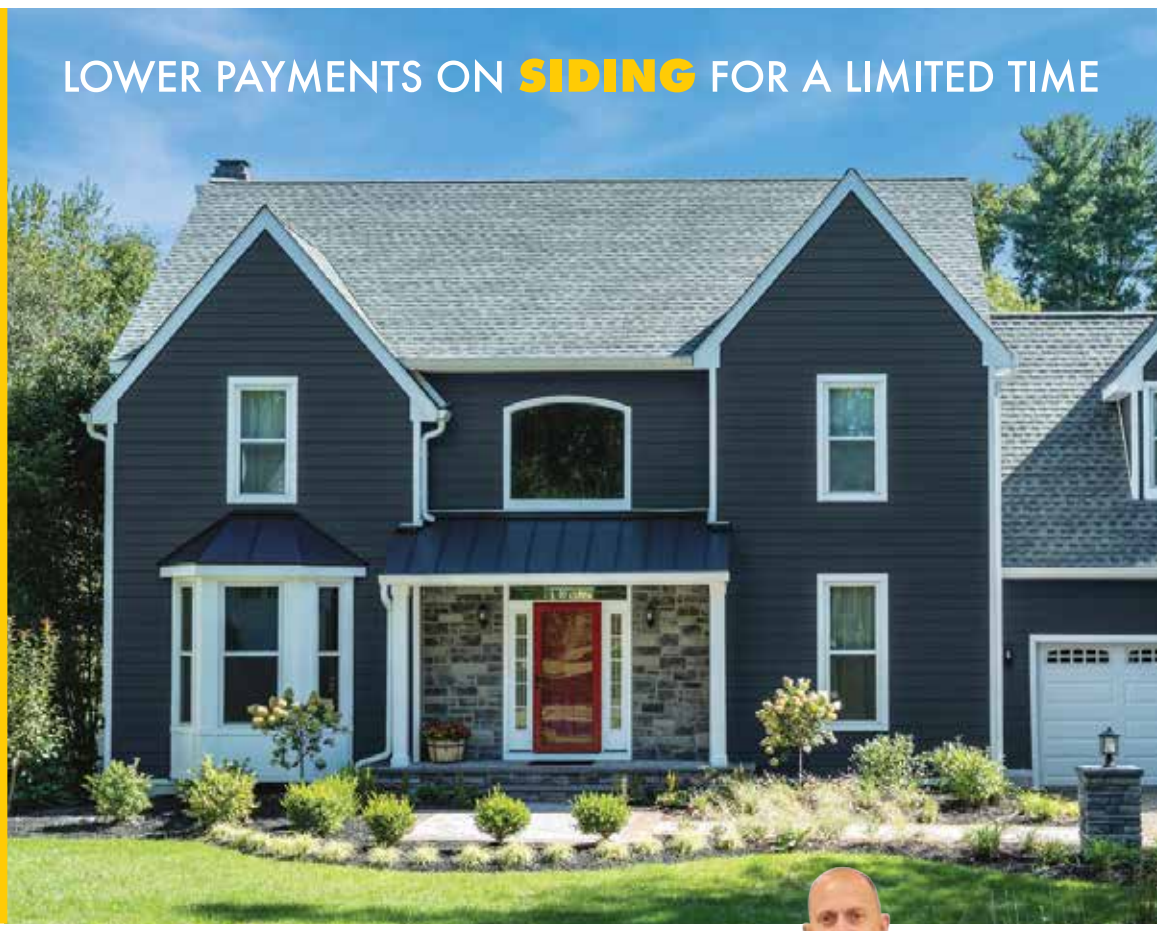
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Types of home insulation and where to install them

When thinking about renovating their homes, homeowners may imagine changing wall colors, expanding room sizes or upgrading appliances and fixtures. However, unless people take inventory of the less glamorous components of the home, such as structure, plumbing, heating and cooling, and insulation, other improvements may be for naught.

A home insulation project certainly does not offer the wow factor of a

kitchen remodel, but insulation serves a vital function in the house that helps keep people comfortable and reduces energy consumption. Insulation is typically placed in areas where air escapes, such as between the stud cavities inside the walls and in the attic, and serves to slow and reduce heat transfer.

The U.S. Department of Energy says between 50 and 70% of the energy used in homes is for heating and cooling.



By improving home insulation, homeowners can make their homes more comfortable, consistent and efficient. In fact, the ENERGY STAR program overseen by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency says homeowners stand to save an average of 15% on heating and cooling costs by adding proper insulation. To do so, homeowners can take a crash course in home insulation and find the products that fit their needs.

Blanket batts and rolls:

Blanket batts and rolls typically are constructed with fiberglass, so proper safety gear, such as a mask and gloves, is needed when handling them. Installing this type of insulation is relatively easy since the materials are designed to fit the standard width between studs, rafters and floor joists.

Loose fill:

Loose fill is usually made of fiberglass or cellulose (recycled paper fiber). It is blown or sprayed into place with pneumatic equipment, according to The Home Depot. Loose fill can be ideal for hard-to-reach areas in

attics or inside wall cavities. It's good for adding insulation to irregularly shaped areas. Since it requires special equipment, this is a job best left to professionals.

Sprayed foam:

Sprayed foam is just as the name implies, a foam made from polyurethane, polyisocyanurate, cementitious, or other materials that are applied by a spray container. DIYers who need only small applications can use canned products. Large quantities are pressure-sprayed by professionals.

Foam board/rigid foam panels:

Ideal for unfinished walls, such as basement or foundation walls, floors and ceilings, these are boards of polyurethane or polystyrene. Foam boards tend to reduce energy consumption more effectively than other types of insulation.


Homeowners considering upgrading their insulation or amending existing insulation should do their homework on the type of insulation that will be most effective for their homes.



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Small renovations that make a big difference

Home renovation projects were high on homeowners' priority lists during the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic. Throughout much of 2020, people across the globe were forced to spend much of their time at home as leaders and governments across the globe sought to prevent the spread

of a recession have led many homeowners to emphasize smaller projects. With that in mind, the following are some small renovations that can have a big impact.

· **Storage addition:** Regardless of where storage is added, be it the kitchen or a home office or a laundry

a fresh coat of paint can make a statement without breaking the bank. Fading paint on bedroom walls and kitchen cabinets can be painted over with a fresh coat of the same color or even something more vibrant. Outside, apply a fresh coat to a wooden deck or paint over brick siding to create a whole new look.

· **Molding:** Crown molding can add a touch of elegance to any room. Rooms can be transformed in a single weekend with the installation of new or

replacement crown molding. A simple molding installation is a task many do-it-yourselfers can handle on their own, while homeowners with less DIY experience may benefit from hiring a contractor to create a layered molding look.

Homeowners are pivoting away from costly renovations to more budget-conscious projects. Various less expensive undertakings can transform spaces at a fraction of the cost of more extensive renovations.



of COVID-19. More time at home compelled millions of homeowners to invest more in their properties, thus sparking a renovation boom.

By early 2023, the renovation boom that marked the initial days of the pandemic appeared to have burst. In May 2023, the popular home improvement retailer Home Depot reported its sales had fallen by 4.5% in the first quarter of the year and that its income had fallen by more than 6% from the same period a year earlier. That marked the end of what Home Depot CEO Ted Decker characterized as "a three-year period of unprecedented growth" in the home improvement sector.

Home Depot's decline in sales was attributed to a number of factors, including a pivot among homeowners from large projects to smaller renovations. Inflation and the looming threat

room, extra space to keep items out of view can dramatically alter the look of a home. Unused kitchen walls can be transformed with some inexpensive, easily hanged shelves, while some laundry pedestals with storage drawers can help keep washrooms clear of clutter.

· **Polish floors:** Elbow grease might be the biggest expenditure when cleaning hardwood floors. The wood flooring experts at Bona® advise homeowners to polish their floors once every two to four months depending on how much foot traffic the floors get. A fresh polishing can make floors look brand new and ensures dirt and dust are not hanging around as uninvited houseguests.

· **Paint:** Painting is another inexpensive option for budget-conscious homeowners who want to update their homes. There is no shortage of places in a home, both inside and out, where

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How to compare contractors' bids

Home renovation projects are significant undertakings. It is common for homeowners who may not have the time nor the expertise to do the work themselves to call in professionals to tackle these jobs.

According to the home improvement resource HomeGuide.com, for a bathroom remodel, which is one of the more popular improvement projects, installation and labor accounts for 10 to 25% of the total project cost. In general, many contractors pay themselves \$300 to \$500 for an hourly rate, while helpers may make \$150 per hour.

Materials used account for the other components of an overall project cost. Homeowners negotiate the best rates possible by obtaining a number of bids from contractors, spelling out both labor and material costs and determining their best option. Here is how to compare bids.

Check as many reviews as possible:

Go online, ask friends for recommendations, or rely on the Better Business Bureau to find reliable contractors. A contractor who seems too good to be true will not necessarily be so, but it is still best to vet each professional thoroughly prior to signing a contract.

Cost basis vs bid basis:

Certain contractors will produce an estimate based on the best guess of the cost of supplies then add on a flat fee or percentage for their services. This is called a cost basis bid. Others will create a bid that includes all their anticipated supply and labor costs, known as a bid basis bid. Know what you are getting to make the most accurate comparison.

Create a master itemized checklist:

It is easy to explain the project differently from one contractor to another when doing so verbally. That may result in a different plan and price. Rather, make a checklist of what you want done and have several copies to give to the contractors with whom you meet. This makes it easier to compare costs line by line.

Have specific materials in mind:

Make sure bids are based on the same materials and tasks. For example, if you are comparing window replacement quotes, be sure that each quote is based on the same window material and coating. Vinyl replacement windows may not cost the same as fiberglass or wood. It is much easier to compare pricing when contractors provide estimates reflecting the same materials.

Small versus big contracting companies:

Some bids may differ based on the manpower of the company. One contractor may view a project as an easy one that can be slipped right into the schedule. Another may have to devote more time and effort if it is being undertaken by one or two people. This can affect cost in the quote. Furthermore, a contractor who does a lot of advertising in print, television or online or has an office or warehouse space, may have extra overhead costs that are passed on to the customer.

Doing your own demo:

Figure out if the contractor will allow you to perform a portion of the tear-out, clean-up or other tasks to save on labor costs. Make sure this is included in the bid.

Comparing contractor work bids can be tricky, but it helps homeowners know they are getting the best value for their money.

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Sanctuary Apartments undergo final renovations

Final renovations of Wayne's Sanctuary Apartments are concluding this fall.

Largely remaining the same since its construction in 1909, the original church and sanctuary building underwent about a year of remodeling to be repurposed into apartments starting in 2022.

A group of local investors spearheaded the project in order to save the historic building from demolition.

The apartments feature six units—two 3-bedroom, two 2-bedroom and two 1-bedroom.

Many original features remain in the building including 37 original stained-glass windows and the stage area from the former sanctuary.

The public had the opportunity to witness the transformation as project managers held two open houses. One took place in September of 2022 during the ground breaking ceremony where people could see the "before,"

and in July of this year, the public could walk through and see the "after."

The 3-bedroom units, located in the old sanctuary, feature 20-foot ceilings, two levels and an open floor plan for the kitchen, dining and living spaces.

In the garden-level units, the ceilings are 11 feet.

The architect for the remodel was Roy Ley with Hoke Ley, an architecture and interior design firm in Lawrence, Kansas. Roy has already designed several buildings in Wayne, including State Nebraska Bank & Trust's Main Branch in downtown Wayne and its SNBuilding at 1010 Main Street. The general contractor was Otte Construction from Wayne, and local/regional contractors were used as much as possible throughout construction to help support the north-east Nebraska economy.

See SANTUARY, page 4B



Safety first with DIY electrical work

Home improvement projects can help homeowners transform their homes. Such projects are costly, but many homeowners save money by doing some, if not all, of the work themselves.

trained, whereas homeowners may not be skilled enough to avoid accidents or injuries, which can prove fatal when working with electricity.

Homeowners who take the do-it-yourself route with electrical work

service panels, subpanels, wiring and more. These systems are complex, and homeowners who intend to do some DIY electrical work should familiarize themselves with their home electrical systems prior to beginning any work. The ESFI notes that knowledge of their home electrical systems can help homeowners more safely navigate them and make maintenance easier.

· Honestly assess your skills. An honest assessment of skills is absolutely necessary prior to working on an electrical system. According to the National Safety Council, injuries relating to electrical incidents typically fall into one of four categories: electrical shock, electrocution, falls, and burns. Each of these injuries is significant. For example, electric shock, which occurs when electrical current passes over or through a person's body, involves burns, abnormal heart rhythm and unconsciousness. Given the potential for serious injury, the ESFI urges homeowners to make an honest assessment of their skills before they begin working on their home's electrical systems. Little or no experience working with electrical systems should be considered a significant hurdle to any DIY project.

· Turn the power off. It is essential

that the power to the circuit that will be worked on be turned off prior to starting any work. This can be accomplished by switching off the circuit breaker in the main service panel. Similarly, when working on appliances or lamps, make sure the products are unplugged prior to working on them.

· Do not touch plumbing or gas pipes when doing electrical work. The experts at the Indiana Electric Cooperative note that the risk for electrocution is significant when water comes in contact with electricity. It is imperative that homeowners do not touch plumbing and gas pipes when performing a DIY electrical project. Professionals know how to work around such pipes while minimizing their risk for electric shock or worse, and homeowners must familiarize themselves with the techniques professionals rely on to stay safe if they intend to begin DIY electrical projects.

Homeowners are best served by leaving electrical work to the professionals. However, those who insist on doing such work themselves should do their homework and get to know their systems and safety protocols prior to beginning a project.



The Electrical Safety Foundation International, a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting electrical safety, recommends that homeowners leave electrical work to the professionals. Licensed electricians are well-

should consider these safety tips, courtesy of the ESFI, before beginning a home electrical project.

· Learn your home electrical system. Home electrical systems may include power lines, electric meters,

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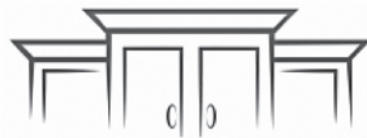
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Backyarding on a budget: Six money-saving hacks for Fall

Fall is an opportune time to set up your backyard for year-round success. Work put into landscaping in the fall determines the quality of the space for all of your family's backyarding activities, from family football games

from the TurfMutt Foundation:

1. Clean out flower beds & add mulch. Simply cleaning out your flower beds (use a leaf blower to make quick work of the task) and adding a fresh layer of mulch works won-

In the fall, cut your lawn shorter than during the rest of the growing season and continue to mow until your grass goes into hibernation for the winter.

4. Pick perennials. Perennials — those cold-hardy plant species that will return again in the spring — are a smart money choice because you only have to buy them once to enjoy them for years to come.

5. Plant climate-appropriate species. Native plants — those that occur naturally in your region — are a smart buy

any time of the year. They are more likely to thrive in your micro-climate without much maintenance or watering. They are also better for local wildlife and pollinators and help preserve the balance of the natural ecosystem.

6. Look for deals. Many nurseries and home improvement stores offer end-of-season sales on landscaping essentials from plants to outdoor power equipment (mowers, trimmers, leaf blowers, etc.) that make even big backyarding tasks easier.



at Thanksgiving and Easter egg hunts in the spring, to taking your office to the back patio and meditation in a backyard hammock.

“Work in your yard, and it will work for you. That’s always been our motto, but it’s particularly important to follow this credo in the fall when we can make the most impact in our yards,” says Kris Kiser, President & CEO of the TurfMutt Foundation, which encourages people to care for and use the green space around them. “You don’t have to break the bank to create a backyard that will serve many purposes for your family year-round.”

Here are six money-saving hacks for creating the backyard of your dreams

ders. New mulch not only holds weeds at bay, it also helps retain moisture around plants, trees and shrubs.

2. Prune bushes & trees. Trimming bushes, shrubs, and trees is another inexpensive way to make a big impact in your yard’s aesthetic. Use a chainsaw, trimmer or hedger to remove dead or dying branches and stems. This preserves the health of the main branch and improves the shape of the plant. Pruning also encourages plants to flower later.

3. Keep grass mowed and weeded. Regular lawn mowing helps your grass stay healthy and strong and improves the overall appearance of your yard-scape without spending much money.

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(continued from page 1B)



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The benefits of energy-efficient homes

Consumer efforts to be more eco-conscious are more and more noticeable. For proof of that, one need look no further than the increase in vehicle charging stations. Such stations are more accessible than ever and illustrate that consumer preference is increasingly leaning toward products that leave as small a carbon footprint as possible.

Another indicator of a growing interest in eco-friendly products is the popularity in energy-efficient homes. In fact, a recent survey from the National Association of Home Builders found that energy-efficient features are among the most sought-after "must-haves" among homebuyers. Among those surveyed, 83% desired Energy Star-rated windows, 81% wanted

Energy Star-rated appliances and 80% preferred energy-efficient lighting.

Though eco-conscious sensibilities compel millions of homeowners to make their homes more energy-efficient, that is not the only reason to upgrade your home. The following are a handful of the many benefits of energy-efficient homes.

· **Save money:** Inflation was one of the biggest stories of 2022, as the cost of living rose dramatically in the wake of world events. According to data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, inflation led to an overall 6.5% increase in prices. But that increase was dwarfed by the cost of

See **BENEFITS**, page 2C



House moving project nears end

Three houses, formerly across the street from Wayne State College, have all now found their new homes on the south edge of Wayne.

The WSC Foundation owned the houses at their original locations and decided to demolish them to begin its upcoming dorm projects.

According to City Administrator, Wes Blecke, the foundation reached out to the City of Wayne to see if the houses could be saved. Wayne's Community Redevelopment Authority (CRA) gave three lots and a line of credit for the move.

Two moving companies assisted with the relocation, one moving two houses and the other taking the largest, formerly known as the Alumni House.

All three homes traveled in a parade line, Blecke said. The move took two days, with the houses sitting overnight in a lot next to Great Dane.

On the next day, the houses trailed along the rest of the planned route, going one mile north, three miles west and one mile south.



The three houses are now at their new 'home' on Chicago Street in the southwest section of Wayne. They were saved from being demolished and will soon have new owners.

All three houses have purchase agreements, Blecke said. Two are currently over top of their final resting points, just waiting to lower down.

The foundation for the former Alumni house needs to finalize before workers put the house in its forever spot.

"It was a great partnership between the WSC Foundation and the City," Blecke said. "They were able to save money by not demolishing those homes

and we made some money on the sales. It was a lot of work, but we are glad to have saved those homes from going into the landfill."



All three houses traveled in a convoy around Wayne in a process that took two days to complete.



Work was done on the former WSC Alumni House before it was moved to its new location.

How homeowners can turn attics into livable spaces

Houses typically feature various areas that are traditionally designed for storage, such as garages, basements and attics. However, with some renovation, these spaces can be transformed into livable areas.

Homeowners who would like to convert attics into livable spaces need to take certain things into consideration before starting an improvement project. While the attic may seem like it has plenty of room and is structurally sound enough to walk in, that is not necessarily so. To be converted into usable living

space, an attic must be brought up to the standards of modern building codes, according to the design experts at Board & Vellum. Retrofitting beams and insulation can eat up available space in an attic. Thus, it is best to consult an expert to see if an attic can be converted.

Furthermore, an attic not initially designed as a room when the house was built can add extra "load" upstairs if it is converted. That could present certain structural problems. That means a structural engineer also must be consulted to see if adding beams,

flooring and drywall will necessitate other changes elsewhere in the home to accommodate the extra load.

In order to have a functional attic room, building codes will dictate that it needs to be accessible by a full-size staircase. Also, it will need to have another exit in case of an emergency so that will likely be an accessible window, according to the home information site The Fill.

Homeowners' budgets and renovation plans will need to factor into these considerations. Homeowners also are advised to check local permits to determine what else may be required to go forward. It is best to follow the rules.

Lack of a permit for work can affect the ability to sell a home down the line.

Individuals also should plan for heating and cooling upgrades as the home will need to have ductwork installed in the attic, or at the least, a stand-alone heating and cooling unit. As heat rises, it can get quite warm in an attic, so ventilation and comfort should be considered.

The attic will need to be wired for electricity for lighting and other needs. Air sealing and additional insulation can the attic space more comfortable as well. Consult with a qualified electrician and an HVAC technician and have an energy audit done to discuss needs.

Benefits

(continued from page 1C)

electricity, which increased by 14.3% in 2022. Energy-efficient appliances can help homeowners overcome that spike, as the U.S. Department of Energy indicates upgrading to such products can help homeowners reduce their energy costs by as much as 30%.

· **Improve resale value:** As the NAHB survey indicates, modern homebuyers want energy-efficient homes. They are also willing to pay more for such homes. Research from the mortgage lender Freddie Mac found that homes with energy-efficient ratings sold for nearly 3% more on average than homes without such ratings.

· **Live healthier:** The benefits of energy-efficient homes are not just economic, though health-related benefits certainly produce an economic incentive as well.

According to the American Council

for an Energy-Efficient Economy, insulation and air sealing protect individuals from heat waves and other ripple effects of climate change. The ACEEE notes that weatherization can improve indoor air quality and comfort, a notable benefit for asthma sufferers and seniors.

In fact, the ACEEE estimates that integrating energy efficiency programs in homes could reduce seniors' risk for falls in their homes, potentially saving \$2 billion in fall-related health care costs over the next decade, and improve asthma outcomes, which could reduce health care costs by as much as half a billion dollars.

Energy-efficient products and practices pay numerous dividends, making them a worthy expenditure for any homeowners looking to upgrade their homes.



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Six backyarding renovation mistakes to avoid

Summer and backyarding – the act of taking our indoor life outside – go hand in hand. This time of year especially, the backyard beckons for entertaining, working, exercising, relaxing and reconnecting. But those looking to make improvements to their family yard for even more backyarding fun this summer need to avoid some common backyard renovation mistakes.

“Mulligan the TurfMutt and I recently moved into a new home and we were reminded about some of the backyard

ing and offering a place for kids to learn and grow as well as work out their wiggles – your backyard has unlimited potential to expand your home’s living space.

•Planting fake grass. Plastic grass offers none of the life-giving benefits of real grass – such as oxygen production, carbon sequestration, urban heat dissipation, or air pollution reduction. Real grass offers all these benefits, and it is easier on feet and paws. Also, real grass is a natural air conditioner!

planting a healthy balance of grasses, flowers, shrubs, and trees that thrive in your yard’s conditions and bloom at different times throughout the year.

•Not utilizing community green spaces. Think of community parks, dog parks, green belts and school yards as an expansion of your own backyard square footage. Not only do these community areas provide a change of scenery from your own backyard, they are particularly beneficial for those with little to no backyard space of

their own.

•Failing to keep safety in mind. Outdoor power equipment makes big backyarding projects easier, but it is critical to keep safety in mind. Read your owner’s manual and follow all manufacturer’s guidelines. Do not disable or alter any of the safety features. Always keep pets and children away from machinery during operation, and do not let children on or near lawn mowers at any time.



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Here are the top backyarding renovation mistakes to avoid, according to the TurfMutt Foundation:

•Not considering your yard’s full potential. Your yard has the ability to safely and comfortably accommodate a range of functions for your family. From outdoor officing to al fresco din-

•Forgetting the “right plant, right place” rule. This is the “Golden Rule” of backyarding, but it is more than just knowing which plants will thrive in sunny spots versus shaded areas. Selecting the right plants for your micro-climate and lifestyle will result in a living landscape that requires minimal upkeep on your part while offering maximum environmental benefits.

•Not treating your yard like part of the connected ecosystem. Your yard links with other community green spaces to provide food and shelter for pollinators, such as birds, bees, butterflies, bats and other creatures. Support pollinators and wildlife by

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Fire safety protocols to keep in mind when holiday decorating

Decorating the interior and exterior of a home is a beloved holiday season tradition in millions of households. Such decor makes it easy to dive into the festive nature of the season.

Many people could not imagine a holiday season without decorating their homes, and it is vital that celebrants do so safely. Fire safety is especially important during a time of year when string lights and potentially dried out trees feature so prominently. These fire safety tips can ensure this holiday season is safe.

- Buy the safest lights. It might be tempting to buy the most inexpensive lights, especially given all the extra costs already associated with the holiday season. However, safety should be the utmost priority when buying new lights. Testing laboratories such as CSA, Intertek and UL certify products to ensure they are safe for use. Products that are not certified should be avoided.

- Use lights and cords where they're intended to be used. The packaging on lights will indicate if the product is intended to be used indoors or outdoors. It is vital that individuals decorating their homes with lights pay attention to these labels. Never decorate the exterior of a home with interior lights, and vice versa. Extension

cords made for indoors also should not be used outdoors and vice versa.

- Be especially careful with candles.

burning candles, place them on heat-resistant surfaces that are beyond the reach of curious kids and pets. Never

built exclusively with GFCIs, which are recognizable because they feature two buttons between the outlets. But older homes may not be equipped with GFCIs, particularly with exterior outlets. GFCI installation is not an especially expensive job, so homeowners should ask an electrician to inspect their interior and exterior outlets and replace non-GFCIs with GFCIs.

- Do not pinch light cords. Stringing lights can be a hassle, but cords should never be pinched in doors or windows or beneath interior and exterior furniture. Doing so increases the risk of damage to the cord, which in turn increases the likelihood of fire.

- Avoid overloading circuits. Overloaded circuits pose a significant fire hazard. When plugging in lights, choose outlets that are not already occupied by devices and other electronics. If need be, unplug appliances like televisions and devices while lights are on and plugged in.

When decorating this holiday season, celebrants are urged to do everything they can to reduce the risk of fire in their homes.



Candles should only be burned when adults are in the room and should always be extinguished before leaving the room or going to bed. When

place candles within arm's length of Christmas trees or houseplants, including poinsettias.

- Ask an electrician to inspect your exterior outlets and circuits. Ground fault circuit interruptor (GFCI) outlets are designed to prevent electric shocks and reduce the risk of electrical fires. Most areas now require new homes be




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Make safety an important part of home cleaning

Safety may not be on the minds of people when they gather equipment and cleaning supplies to clean their homes, but even seemingly innocuous items can be dangerous. The National Safety Council warns that accidents and deaths often occur when least expected - including when doing chores around the house.

The online safety advocate SafeWise says that more than 160,000 Americans die as a result of an accident every year, and household injuries account for 75% of those deaths. It is important to be careful when cleaning around the house, and part of that caution includes recognizing where hazards may be lurking. Here are ways to prevent cleaning and organizing accidents.

Never mix cleansers:

Cleaning chemicals are often effective because they employ bases or acids to produce cleaning actions. By themselves, many of these products are generally safe to use provided users adhere to the usage instructions and precautions. However, when mixed together, certain cleaning products can be extremely hazardous. According to Velocity EHS,

an environmental, health, safety and sustainability advisement company, users should never mix products containing acids and bases. Common cleaning products containing acids include tub and tile cleaners, vinegar and mold removers. Products containing bases include, bleaches, glass cleaners and drain cleaners. Mixing these products can produce toxic gases, intense heat or even explosions.

Avoid falls:

Falls are a major contributor to home injuries. Be especially careful when climbing ladders, and do not lean too far to either side. If possible, have someone hold the ladder steady. Wear nonskid shoes and go slowly. Do not climb on furniture or stack items to reach high spots like top shelves, as this can create a precarious situation.

Lift with care:

Moving furniture or rearranging storage boxes can strain the back and other muscles. Use proper lifting techniques, which include lifting with the legs while keeping the back straight. If the item is too heavy, wait and ask for help.

Wear masks and safety gear:

Whether dusting off the ceiling fan, cleaning out the crawlspace or removing debris from gutters and downspouts, protect the eyes, hands and lungs by wearing the right gear. Safety goggles, durable gloves and a dust mask are must-have cleaning supplies.

Remove supplies promptly

The NSC says about 10 people die from drowning every day in the

United States. Children between the ages of one and four are at greatest risk. Do not leave cleaning buckets filled with water unattended, and make sure to clean up any supplies used right after cleaning to prevent injuries.

Cleaning and maintenance keep homes looking great. Homeowners should always keep safety in mind when cleaning around the house.



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Wood floor cleaning guide

Wood floors are coveted for a number of reasons, not the least of which is their aesthetic appeal. Many people prefer wood flooring because dust and dirt do not become trapped as they would in carpet fibers, seemingly making wood flooring easy to clean.

Most floors endure a lot of wear and tear. However, with care, wood flooring may last for decades. Part of that care includes understanding how to properly clean and maintain wood

floors so they look their best. The following are some steps for keeping wood floors as pristine as possible.

- Remove shoes. It is a good idea to remove shoes, particularly heels, when walking on wood floors. Sharp heels, cleats and other shoes can scratch or dent wood flooring. All shoes can track in excess dirt, which can contribute to a lack of luster as well.

- Sweep or vacuum frequently. The experts at The Spruce suggest sweep-

ing, vacuuming or dust mopping wood floors daily. Dirt and dust make floors more slippery, and dirt or sand particles can lead to scratches on the floor.

staining and warping. With laminate flooring, avoid wet mopping unless the flooring is specifically marked as being able to be wet. The underlayers of lam-



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- Learn your flooring type. Wood flooring is broken down into three main categories: solid hardwood flooring, engineered hardwood flooring and laminate wood flooring. Traditional hardwood is made of planks or strips of any hardwood covered in a wood stain. Engineered flooring is manufactured by gluing together several thin plies of hardwood. Laminate flooring looks like wood but generally is a veneer or a photographic image of wood covered by a thick layer of melamine resin over fiberboard.

- Skip harsh cleansers. Regardless of flooring type, most are covered by a sealant that can become streaky or dull if the wrong cleanser is used. Avoid chlorine bleach, ammonia, pine oil or undiluted vinegar. Instead, choose a cleanser that is specifically recommended for the flooring type. Do not allow water or solutions to sit on the floor, as that can contribute to

inadequate flooring can warp if it gets wet.

- Damp is better than wet. When cleaning wood flooring, use a damp rather than a soaking wet mop. Better Homes & Gardens says standing water can damage wood surfaces.

- Use the hard floor setting. When vacuuming, adjust the vacuum to a hard flooring setting, which will not engage the brush rollers on the vacuum head. Rollers can scratch wood and laminate flooring, advises The Home Depot.

- Use repair products as needed. Scratch and repair kits can fill in small scratches. Wood floor polish and wood waxes also can revitalize worn floors. Again, check that the product is safe for your particular flooring before use.

Wood floors bring warmth to a home and are very popular. Cleaning them correctly can add to their appeal and longevity.

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Complete these home improvements over the weekend

Large-scale renovations can greatly affect a home, but smaller projects can yield impressive results and be completed over the course of a single weekend.

If time is of the essence, these weekend or one-day projects may satisfy homeowners' desires to fix up their homes.

a home. Many entryways can use a minor overhaul, both inside and outside. Paint the front door a different color so it pops from the curb. Install a new mailbox or decorative house numbers. A new welcome mat can change the look as well. Inside, consider laying a new floor. Resilient vinyl tiles come in many different patterns and

hanging a new fixture is not within one's skill set, free-standing table or floor lamps also can cast a new glow on a space.

· Add molding. Molding can add instant aesthetic appeal to a room. Molding is appropriate near the floor, at the top of walls where they meet the ceiling, or even mid-wall as a chair rail. Some homeowners like to create framed molding on walls in formal living spaces.

· Update kitchen or bathroom hardware. Replacing hardware is a fast and easy project, but one that can have immediate impact. Swap out tired or outdated hardware for newer brushed metals and more impactful shapes and designs.

Home renovations do not need to take weeks or months. Many projects can be completed over the course of a weekend.



· Create an accent wall. Painting a focal wall in a home can create a serious impact. The bonus is it will not take as long or require as many materials as painting an entire room. Accent walls frequently feature a bold color, so decide on placement and tackle this project in less than a day.

· Install stair runners. Dress up hardwood stairs with decorative carpet runners. Runners come in elongated pieces of carpeting or individual pieces that can be placed on each step. If carpeting does not fit with the home's design, painting individual stair treads also can create visual appeal.

· Dress up the entryway. An entryway is a guest's first impression of

can mimic the look of wood, travertine or marble. Installing a floor can take a day or two.

· Install a new faucet. Instantly improve a kitchen or a bathroom with new fixtures. New faucets can provide aesthetic appeal and low-flow faucets can help conserve water.

· Create a gallery on the staircase. Gather and arrange framed photos, artwork or wall accents so that they ascend the wall of a staircase. This creates a designer touch and can dress up an often barren area of wall space.

· Install a fresh light fixture. Improve drab spaces with a little illumination. Better Homes & Gardens suggests replacing an existing fixture with something new and vibrant. If

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RADIANT INTERIOR DESIGN

Six backyarding renovation mistakes to avoid

Summer and backyarding – the act of taking our indoor life outside – go hand in hand. This time of year especially, the backyard beckons for entertaining, working, exercising, relaxing and reconnecting. But those looking to make improvements to their family yard for even more backyarding fun this summer need to avoid some common backyard renovation mistakes.

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