

A supplement of the
Unterrified Democrat
October 21, 2020

FALL HOME IMPROVEMENT



Business, city leaders tackle
shortage of single-family homes *pg 2b*

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and so much more!

Business, city leaders tackle shortage of single-family homes

BY NEAL A. JOHNSON
UD EDITOR

Linn is faced with a shortage of single-family homes as the growth of State Technical College has necessarily demanded an increase in student housing.

"We've added 200-plus beds for students in the last year," said State Tech Regents President John A. Klebba. "We haven't ever had that kind of one-year increase. I see the college continuing to grow though maybe not in the double-digit percentage increases we have experienced annually over the last several years."

While it's difficult to quantify the disparity between student housing and single-family developments, Klebba, who serves as Legends Bank's CEO and board chairman, said the housing situation is not all bad.

"There is a lot of potential growth that is unrealized in the Linn area due to the lack of single-family homes," said Klebba. "But there are some positives."

Klebba noted that several people have purchased homes and renovated them for

resale to individuals.

"Some of those were rentals and are being converted to owner-occupied homes," Klebba added. "A number of these homes have been cleaned up and there's enough demand to renovate the home and sell it at a profit. It's been wonderful for Linn, and it helps from a multitude of viewpoints. I think it will continue."

Another positive is that several empty lots in established subdivisions have been purchased with homes built to provide opportunities for families. Called "in-fill" homes, Klebba said having utilities already in place is a bonus.

"There's not much site-prep cost involved, but contractors have to build a home that fits in with the rest of the neighborhood," said Klebba. "You couldn't build a \$250,000 home next to a \$70,000 home and expect to sell it at an appropriate price. Contractors have to maintain a balance so they can make a profit while at the same time offering something homeowners need."

This trend should continue as well, Klebba believes, as long as individuals are willing to sell empty lots at a reasonable price.

"The worst thing we can see is that homes sit empty and eventually are abandoned," said Klebba.

With the growth of the college over the last several years, additional employees have joined the increased number of students, which means there's a need for family housing.

"They want to live closer to the college," said Klebba.

Linn Mayor Dwight Massey agrees. "There isn't a study I can point to or anything like that, but the reality is that single-family housing is limited," he said. "What I would call starter homes are scooped up and turned into rental properties, which is doubly detrimental to the community because the property is not being improved a great deal so there is no value to a potential buyer, and second, we're losing young couples that want to move to Linn because there isn't suitable housing for them."

Mid America Bank Senior VP Steve Brune believes the ratio is 10:1 between student housing and single-family dwellings, with student housing dominating the development world for several years.

"The single-family housing markets in the Osage County area in general have remained constant," Brune said. "Supply and demand will ebb and flow, and adjust accordingly. The growth of student housing in the Linn area has brought the slow pace of single-family housing into the spotlight but I don't think a huge shortage exists. If you look at the Census data for the last three decades, you will find the population of Osage County has changed very little. Our school districts have remained constant for the most part. Our community is full of high quality builders that will get you a home built if you want to live here."

Massey, an instructor at State Tech, said he understands the need for student housing but admits the problem is not limited to the college. "We have a tough time balancing," he said. "There will always be competition for rental properties, and not just for students. Some families cannot purchase a home and need to find a place to rent, but even that is tough."

Then there is a growing trend of young people who simply don't want to own a home. "When I was younger, it was a given that I would leave home, get my education and then a job, and at some point, I was going to buy a home," Massey said. "Today, there are a lot of people who don't necessarily want to buy a house. There's too much trouble with maintenance and upkeep, so they'd rather rent. The mentality of wanting to buy a home isn't a prevalent as it used to be."

One aspect that benefits the growth of Linn is the city's continued plan for im-

provements, notably the project to overlay First and Fifth streets.

"People want to live in an attractive place, and I applaud the city for moving forward with their improvements," said Klebba. "People are more likely to invest in their property when streets are properly maintained."

Massey said since he joined the board as an alderman in 2004, and through his years as mayor, the city of Linn has invested \$8 million in infrastructure. "People don't think about everyday things like running water and reliable sewer," said Massey. "It just happens when they need it to, but it takes a lot of money to make that happen. Now that our underground operations are running pretty well, we are working on the streets. It makes no sense to get our streets paved and looking nice, just to have to tear them up to work on the sewer system."

Massey added that Linn residents are especially lucky that city leaders have been able to find grants and low-interest loans for infrastructure improvements. "We have a pretty great system, especially for a city of our size, and we've worked really hard to get it done without passing a lot of costs to our constituents," he said. "We have really low rates compared to other cities of our size."

Klebba believes to accommodate the increased need for single- and multi-family homes, the city of Linn will need to annex more land, especially to the east.

"State Tech and others in the area have pre-annexation agreements in place, and there's a lot of benefit to bringing everyone into the city of Linn," said Klebba. "There are also a lot of good locations for development on both sides of Highway 89 to the south. Sewer and water developments underway will help that situation."

Klebba is referring to areas that are working with Linn to connect to the city's system, which would make future annexation an easier process.

Massey noted that he's working hard to persuade those who haven't signed a pre-annexation agreement to join the city of Linn.

"It's still in the works, but hopefully soon we'll have everyone on board," he said. "Growing the city of Linn is important in terms of tax revenues, which will allow us to continue making improvements to both the infrastructure and our streets. It will also benefit the property owners."

For those who do wish to buy a home in Linn, what can be done?

Massey said he is very pleased with the long-term approach shown by developer Caleb Bax, who is in the process of building a new subdivision.

Within the city limits, the Baldwin Hills Estate subdivision west of Hwy. 89 is one

Single Family Homes
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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.

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. 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.

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Get ahead of chimney repair

Woodburning fireplaces or fuel stoves can add warmth and ambiance to a home. These appliances are particularly coveted in the cooler months when people spend more time indoors. Maintenance is necessary in order for fireplaces and stoves to function safely, and that upkeep must include paying close attention to the functionality of the chimney.

Chimneys are designed to last for decades. Cracks and spalling in brick chimneys are common concerns that can cause significant damage if left unchecked.

Chimney maintenance involves more than cleaning the flue. Rather than running the risk of costly repairs, which can cost several thousand dollars, homeowners can take some simple steps to keep their chimneys in tip-top shape. Certain components of chimney maintenance are do-it-yourself tasks, while others may be better left to the professionals.

- Start from the inside and ensure that dampers are working properly. When using fireplaces and other appliances, dampers need to be open to allow smoke to vent outside; otherwise, smoke will be trapped in the home and could lead to carbon monoxide buildup. Dampers need to be fixed or replaced if they are not operational. Replacement fireplace dampers should be snug and not have any gaps, states Vertical Chimney Care.

- Conduct a visual inspection of the chimney

to check for any cracks or spalling. Spalling is the wearing away of masonry due to water, weather and time. If enough of the material erodes, that erosion can adversely affect the structural integrity of the chimney. Some repairs can be made by patching up cracks or replacing missing bricks. Chimney tuckpointing is the process of repairing mortar.

- Think about waterproofing the chimney to prevent damage. A water sealant applied to the outside of the chimney can prevent moisture from breaking down the masonry.

- Inspect and replace the chimney cap if it is worn out. A chimney cap is a contraption that sits atop the chimney to allow the smoke to vent while also preventing critters and water from going inside the flue, helping to extend the flue life. The chimney cap attaches to the flue liner, so outside dimensions should be taken to ensure the cap is the right size for the chimney.

- Have the chimney swept. Sweeping helps remove the soot and debris that clings to the inside of the flue, known as creosote. The amount of time the fireplace is used will determine how often the chimney must be cleaned. Generally speaking, the chimney liner needs to be cleaned if it has 1/8-inch or more of soot.

Regular inspection and maintenance can help keep a chimney working safely for decades. For those who do not like working at such an elevation, leave exterior chimney repair to a certified professional.

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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

Pantry - continued on page 7B

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Garden

Tips for your fall garden

SANDI HILLERMANN MCDONALD

Fall is the perfect time to evaluate the garden for improvement to your home's curb appeal, and it is also the perfect time for planting. The cooler crisp days of October make it a great time to care for your yard and garden with the following tips:

- Your curb appeal can be enhanced by decorating with pumpkins, gourds, corn stalks, mums, pansies, kale, and the great selection of Fall plants that are available.
- Lawn seeding should be finished by October 15th this month to insure growth yet this fall. Choose a seed mix for your

Garden - continued on page 7B

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Garden - Continued from page 6B

specific lawn area; sun, shade, sun/shade, play, drought, etc.

- Winterize lawn mowers before storage, by draining gasoline from the tank and the gas line.

- Apply a Winterizer fertilizer on lawns anytime from mid October through November to promote green growth in early spring, the BEST of the neighborhood.

- The average first frost usually arrives sometime between October 15th and October 20th.

- You can gain a few degrees of frost protection by covering tender plants with sheets or lightweight fabric row covers. Do not use plastic; this tends to “draw in” the cold temperatures.

- Dig up Cannas, Dahlias, and Elephant Ears after frost nips their foliage. Before storing them, allow the plants to dry under cover in an airy frost-free place. Store in a cool, dry area, such as a basement, in paper sacks with peat moss.

- Plant flower bulbs (Tulips, Daffodils, Crocus, etc.) for spring bloom. Plant them into groupings for a massed effect of spring color. To fertilize them, use bone meal or a complete bulb fertilizer at planting time.

- October is an excellent month to plant trees, shrubs and perennials. This gives the plants a great start in the warm soil and cool weather of fall, with plenty of

moisture in the spring to become established before the harsh summer heat and drought arrives.

- Continue to water all your plants, especially evergreens, when soils are dry. Until the ground freezes, the plants need moisture for root growth even if they are going dormant.

- After beds have been cleaned and raked, refresh them with bark mulch for the winter months.

- Towards the end of October, trees should be fertilized with tree spikes at their drip line. Use one tree spike per one inch of tree trunk diameter. This will make for beautiful foliage next spring!

- Harvest gourds when their shells become hard or when their color changes from green to brown.

- Do not take hummingbird feeders down before mid October. The bird’s biological clock tells them when to migrate south. It is not dependent on how long we leave our feeders up. Stragglers migrating from areas that are more northern may also find your feeders for some needed nourishment.

Enjoy your yard and garden in every season!

Time to go.

See you in the Garden.

Pantry - Continued from page 5B

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.

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Establish winter habitats for backyard animals

Preparing a property for winter involves putting away lawn furniture, raking leaves and removing any annual plants that have shriveled up and spent the last of their energy. It can be tempting to want to clean up completely and leave a blank slate in the yard. But by doing so, you may be robbing wildlife of the resources they need to overwinter.

The nature and conservation resource In Habitat says plants and animals depend on one another to survive. During the winter, animals may struggle to find adequate shelter and food, especially when there is a lack of sufficient plant matter available. In turn, these animals may actually take up home in people's residences, turning into pests in the process. Bats, field mice and even opossums and raccoons may



LEAVE SOME wild areas of the backyard so animals can roost safely during the winter.

move indoors into attics or basements, leaving behind waste and damage if they can't find adequate shelter outdoors.

Homeowners concerned about potential pest infestations can take steps to ensure animals have places to bed down and escape the cold in their yards this winter. These tips can help local wildlife when the temperatures dip.

- Leave parts of the yard wild. Animals can make a nest in leaves or piles of brushwood. Just make sure piles left out are away from the home so curious critters

don't try to get inside. Leave the task of tidying up shrubs and garden borders until spring, as shrubs can be dense areas to hide for both insects and animals.

- Consider planting animal food sources prior to winter. Plants like elderberry,

holly, mulberry, sumac, and crabapple will grow in colder months and animals can enjoy them as a vital food staple.

- Don't forget water sources. Provide access to fresh water and replace as needed if the water freezes. For homeowners with fish ponds in their backyards, use a hot pot to melt a hole in the top of the pond and allow gases that have accumulated underneath to escape. This allows oxygen to reach fish and frogs in the pond.

- Leave bird, squirrel or bat houses in

the yard. This is a fun and crafty project that can ward off winter boredom while also providing a safe place for local wildlife to shelter in winter.

Animals and insects need some extra help staying comfortable when cool temperatures arrive. Leaving some clean-up tasks for the spring ensures that there are plenty of backyard habitats available to local wildlife.

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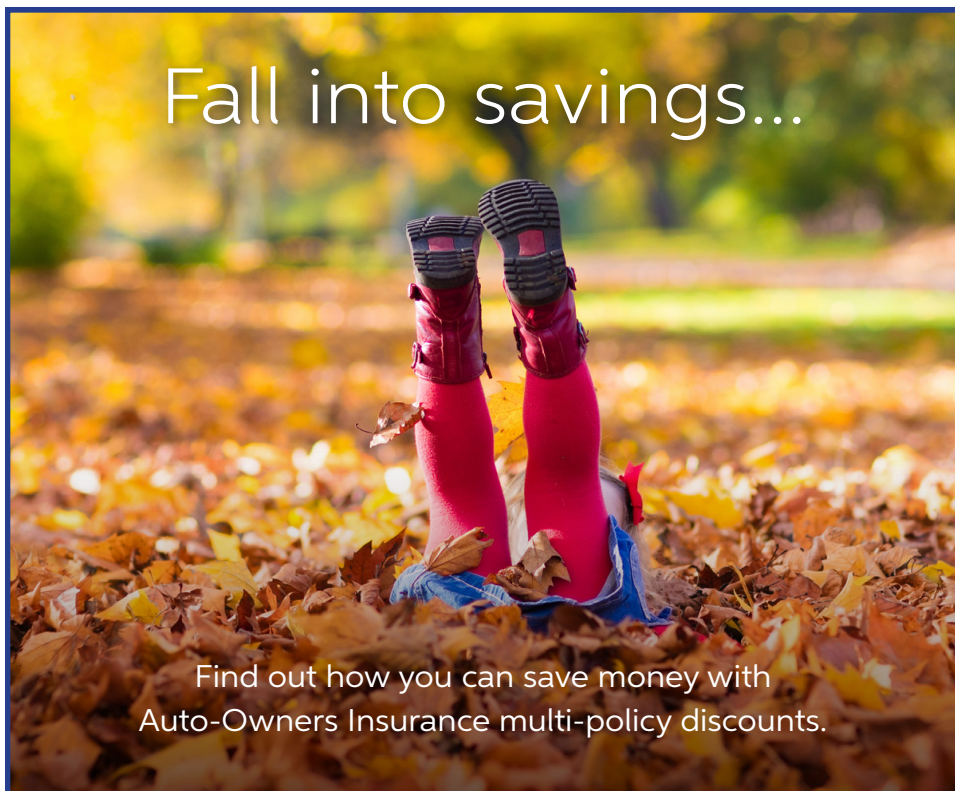
Top five hottest home building trends

These days, home trends are about more than good design and aesthetics — they're about creating spaces that reflect our values and are more comfortable and enjoyable to live in. From net-zero and net-positive construction to tiny minimalist homes, trends are all about your family's lifestyle.

Whether you're shopping for a new home, renovating your own or creating a new build from scratch, here are some of the biggest trends you need to know for inspiration.

Sustainable design: This one has been popular for a long time, but green design has evolved to be about much more than energy-efficient appliances and LED light bulbs. Now, it's all about making sure everything in your home reduces your carbon

Trends - continued on page 11B



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Trends — continued from page 10B

footprint and minimizes any impact on the environment.

To try the trend yourself, think big and get creative – install solar panels on your roof, choose building materials that don't require deforestation and upcycle old furniture for decorative elements instead of buying new.

Disaster resiliency: Climate change affects us in so many negative ways, and one of the top concerns is the increase in natural disasters. From wildfires that last for months to major floods that affect entire cities, we now need to prepare for the worst when building our homes.

Switching to disaster-resilient materials is an important first step. Many builders now prefer to use stronger, more energy-efficient materials like insulated concrete forms (ICFs) instead of more traditional materials like wood. For example, Nudura ICFs can withstand winds of up to 250 miles per hour (equivalent to an F4 tornado) and offer a fire protection rating of up to four hours.

Outdoor living: Many of us are now choosing to forgo getting a cottage or summer home and recreate the experience in our own backyards. This trend helps you make the most of your existing space and take full advantage of your yard or patio during the summer months.

You can design a full living space outside, complete with an outdoor television and comfy couches, as well as a kitchen and refrigerator for entertaining. Consider adding a fireplace or firepit to keep warm during cool summer nights and enjoy the outdoors through spring, fall and even winter if you're brave.

Home automation: This is another longstanding trend that shows no signs of slowing down. It has also evolved to encompass more of the home to make life even more comfortable and convenient. From an oven that can be turned on remotely to preheat, to skylights that can open and close automatically to create the perfect ambient temperature, there are more ways than ever to integrate smart home technology into your living space.

You can start small with voice assistant and smart light bulbs and work your way up to a total smart home system that includes home security, temperature controls and all your electronic devices.

Customization: You don't have to settle for what mass manufacturers decide to build, or what works for everyone else. Creating a home that's as unique as you are is the latest trend, with custom-built storage and personalized architectural features to make your space stand out.

You can even go as far as building a custom home that's suited to your family. Older home demolitions and purchasing land-only properties is becoming more common, allowing you to work with an architect to create exactly what you want with a new build.

Find more information about the benefits of building a home with ICFs at nudura.com.

How to design a fitness room

People exercise for many different reasons. Exercise can improve one's appearance, reduce the risk for illness, alleviate stress or anxiety, and even help pass some time.

Exercise is often a social activity, but in the wake of social distancing guidelines issue in response to the COVID-19 outbreak, many people have found themselves looking for ways to exercise at home.

Building a home fitness room has never been a more timely project, and such a project can continue to provide rewards even when life returns to some semblance of normalcy. Here's how to successfully stock a home gym.

- Find a dedicated space. A home gym will be limited by the amount of space that can be devoted to workouts. Possible fitness room locations include a spare bedroom, a garage, a basement, or an enclosed patio. Measure the space so you can pick and choose equipment that will fit. Leave some floor space empty for movement exercises or mat activities.

- Keep the space bright. Darkness can sap energy levels, so invest in mirrors and adequate overhead lighting to make

the space inviting. Natural light can make the exercise area more enjoyable.

- Consider the flooring. New flooring can protect against damage and make an area more conducive to working out.

Rubber mats can offset echoes and reduce the noise of running on a treadmill or setting down heavy weights.

- Use space-saving equipment. A home gym space will likely not be as expansive as the space inside a traditional fitness center. Thankfully, many activities do not require a lot of space or equipment. Classic exercises like squats, lunges, push ups, and sit ups require little gear but still produce results. Figure out which equipment you like the most and invest in two or three key pieces. Dumbbells of various weights, a medicine ball and a yoga mat can be all you need to create a versatile, effective workout. A TRX system and a door-mounted pull-up bar also are great space-saving options.

- Have a TV hookup. A home gym may benefit from a smart TV that you can use to stream workout videos or catch up on the latest news while running the treadmill or using



the stationary bike.

A home gym is beneficial year-round, and can be especially valuable when social distancing guidelines are put in place.



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Three common DIY mistakes to avoid

Pride tends to swell when homeowners successfully complete do-it-yourself projects on their homes. In addition to saving homeowners money, DIY projects provide a unique way for men and women to personally connect with their homes. The ability to look at a finished project and say it's a result of your own handiwork can make a home feel more your own.

As fun and fulfilling as DIY projects can be, they also can be nerve-racking and induce anxiety. When DIY projects falter, fixing them can prove costly, as homeowners typically must call in contractors to correct their mistakes and get a project back on track. That results in additional labor and material costs that might have been avoidable, especially for homeowners who make an effort to avoid some common DIY mistakes.

Failure to secure permits

Even though homeowners own their homes, that does not mean they have carte blanche to do what they want with them. Many renovation projects require homeowners

Mistakes

Mistakes - continued on page 13B



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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.



Mistakes — continued from page 12B

to secure permits before projects can commence. Some may even require additional permits as the projects advance. If proper permits are not secured, homeowners may be fined and projects may be nixed, regardless of how much money homeowners have spent up to that point. Before beginning a home renovation project, homeowners should always contact their local permit office to determine if any permits are required. Bankrate.com notes that permits are often required for any project larger than painting or wall-papering.

Overestimating your abilities

DIY television shows make home renovation projects look easy, but reality suggests otherwise. Homeowners with little or no experience renovating a home may want to take classes before they think about starting a project on their own. Even online tutorials tend to make jobs appear easier than they are. Roofing and plumbing projects tend to be best left to the professionals, as these projects can be either dangerous or vulnerable to disaster if not addressed by trained professionals.

Incorrect materials

Whether it's to save money or a byproduct of inexperience, DIYers do not always choose the correct materials for a job. Experienced contractors have ample experience working with all sorts of materials and are therefore in a unique position to recommend the best materials for any given job. That resource is not available for DIYers, who must perform ample research before beginning a job so the project involves the most appropriate materials. Incorrect materials can be a sunken cost that derails a project, but even jobs completed using incorrect materials may need to be redone a lot more quickly than those that employed the right materials the first time.

Many home renovation projects can be completed without the help of professional contractors, especially when homeowners take steps to avoid some of the more common mistakes made by DIYers.

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Five tips to prepare for window replacement

Windows

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

Windows - continued on page 16B



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What to expect during a bathroom remodel

There are many reasons to renovate a home. Some homeowners purchase fixer-uppers and commit to making major renovations before they even move in, while others may renovate their homes with an eye on resale value. But many homeowners also take on renovation projects to make the homes more livable for themselves.

Bathroom renovations are popular projects. In fact, a 2018 survey from the National Association of Home Builders found that bathroom remodels are the most popular remodeling projects. But just because bathroom remodeling projects are popular doesn't mean they're easy to endure. Knowing what to expect during a bathroom remodel can help homeowners get through the renovation process.

Cost

Bathroom remodeling projects can be expensive. According to Remodeling magazine's "Cost vs. Value 2019" report, a mid-range bathroom remodeling project cost an average of \$20,420 in 2019, while an upscale remodel cost just under \$64,000. Homeowners should develop



budgets for their bathroom renovation projects to determine which type of project they can afford. In addition, setting aside a little extra money for overruns is a wise move that can help homeowners handle any unforeseen expenses that arise during the project.

Noise

Few home renovation projects can be undertaken quietly, and bathroom renovations tend to generate a lot of noise. The noise can be difficult to overcome for

professionals who work from home full-time, and it also can be hard on parents of young children who still nap and don't yet go to school. Parents of young children may find it best to delay bathroom renovation projects until their children are school-aged and out of the house for most of the day on weekdays.

Mess

The debris generated by bathroom renovation projects is another thing homeowners must prepare for. In addition

to preparing for the waste generated by the project, first-time renovators must realize that dust might be a big issue once the project begins. Dust can pose a threat to residents' overall health, particularly the health of youngsters whose bodies haven't yet fully developed. As a result, parents of young children may want to schedule renovations during family vacations so their children are exposed to as little dust as possible.

Changes

Few renovations go off without a hitch. Once a project begins, contractors often uncover issues that weren't noticeable to the naked eye. These issues may increase the cost of completing a project or force homeowners to change their plans to make the project stay as close to their budgets as possible. Recognizing that these decisions may have to be made on the fly can help homeowners feel more prepared when unexpected issues arise.

Bathroom renovation projects are worthwhile investments. Knowing what to expect during a bathroom renovation project can help homeowners handle all the twists and turns that may arise.

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Windows — continued from page 14B

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 of old debris?
- What is the protocol for installation during inclement weather?

2. Research permits. Most home ren-

ovation 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.



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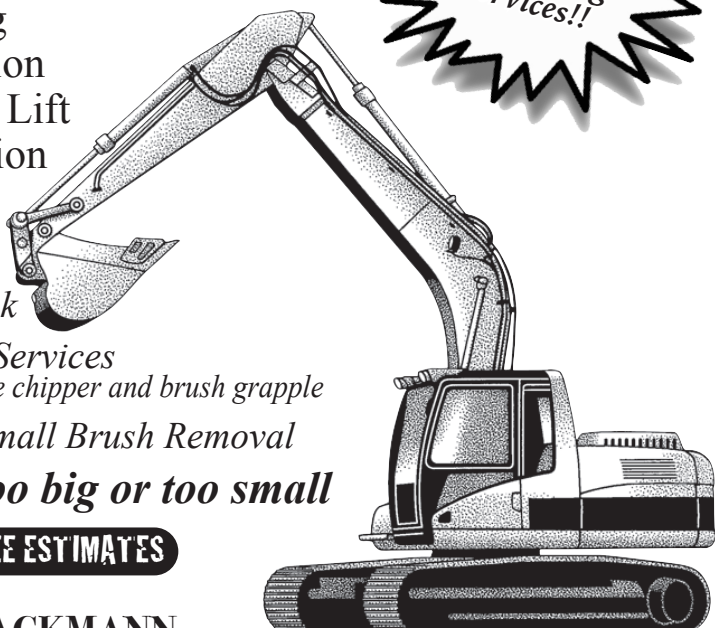
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Laundry room renovations you'll love

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.

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Kitchen

Affordable features to consider when revamping your kitchen

Kitchens are popular gathering spots in many homes. That popularity is reflected in various ways, including how many homeowners choose to remodel their kitchens.

A 2019 report from the home renovation and design resource Houzz found that kitchens were the most popular room to renovate in 2018. Homeowners considering kitchen remodels should know that the Houzz report also indicated that spending on kitchen remodels increased by 27 percent in 2018.

Kitchens - continued on page 19B

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Kitchens — continued from page 18B

Homeowners concerned by the cost of remodeling a kitchen should know that there are ways to give kitchens a whole new feel without breaking the bank.

Appliances

Consumer Reports notes that luxury home buyers expect high-end features, including professional ranges and built-in refrigerators that match the surrounding cabinetry. However, many mainstream brands offer “faux pro” features that can equal more expensive alternatives. Consumer Reports even notes that many budget-friendly faux pro appliances outperformed their high-end counterparts in terms of reliability.

Countertops

Countertops tend to capture the eye’s attention when walking into a kitchen. Outdated and/or damaged countertops grab that attention for all the wrong reasons, while updated countertops made from today’s most popular materials provide that wow factor homeowners seek. If granite is a must-have, Consumer Reports notes that homeowners can save substantial amounts of money by choosing granite from remnants at the stone yard. If marble is your ideal countertop, save money by choosing a domestic product as opposed to one imported from overseas.

Cabinets

Custom-built cabinets may be a dream, but they tend to be a very expensive one. Such cabinets are designed to adhere to the dimensions of the kitchen, and Consumer Reports notes that they can cost tens of thousands of dollars. If that estimate would bust your budget, examine the current layout of the existing cabinets. If the layout is fine but the cabinets need work, you can give them a whole new look by refinishing them. If the cabinets must go, stock units or semi-custom cabinets can provide a new look without busting the budget.

Kitchen remodels can be expensive. But there are many affordable ways to revamp a kitchen.

Single Family Homes

continued from page 2B

of the largest projects in the city’s history, with 95 to 100 single-family homes. The project will be broken down into three phases, with the first phase including 33 to 34 lots.

“Give Caleba lot of credit,” said Massey. “He’s really doing a great service to Linn by making homes available.”

When variances were granted by the Linn Planning and Zoning Commission in June of this year, the land was also rezoned from agricultural to residential.

Initially, the hope was to have homes going up by this fall, but Bax said there has been a delay.

“We have had a slight hold up with the engineering of the sewer line to get plans for the construction of the subdivision finalized by this fall,” Bax said. “The city is working to extend the sewer line to an existing subdivision down Highway 89 South, and our plans are to tie into this line.”

Bax added that Massey and Utilities Superintendent Larry Fredrich have been great partners. “This sewer extension is now in process and hopefully in the direction to get completed soon so we can move forward,” Bax added. “We are hoping we will be able to start on the subdivision this spring after engineered plans are finalized and have lots and houses available for sale a little thereafter.”

The Baldwin Hills Estate subdivision will have all paved streets, sidewalks, water, sewer, underground electric, and high-speed internet, along with solid building restrictions.

Homes will be a minimum of 1,500 to 1,600 square feet on the main level. All will have brick fronts and be designated as single-family homes with 90% of them having basements. There will not be any rentals, student housing, or duplexes allowed in the subdivision.

In terms of the existing need for single-family dwellings, Bax said the area is still strong for housing.

“I foresee this trend in our area to stay as the new single-family housing is very limited and with the growth of the college and other area businesses in our community, the need for housing in the area is sought,” Bax said.

Like Klebba, Bax is pleased with the city of Linn’s approach. “We are lucky to have a city that is proactive in the needs of the future,” he said. “They have in the works to expand the city sewer down Highway 89 south and also up Highway 100 (both sides of the current main boundaries) which will allow additional future growth of both single-family housing and other needs that will arise,” he said. “Many take for granted the utilities the city of Linn has in place but we, the community as a whole, are very lucky to have these utilities, as many surrounding towns don’t have such, which in turn limits growth.”



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Home buying during the COVID-19 outbreak

Homeowners know that the process of buying a home can be both exciting and nerve-racking. The anxiety associated with buying a home has hit new heights during the outbreak of the novel coronavirus COVID-19.

Historically low interest rates and limited inventory has made 2020 an especially unique time to buy a home. It's also a competitive and potentially expensive time to buy a home. While the economic consequences of COVID-19 have been severe, the Federal National Mortgage Association, also known as Fannie Mae, forecasted a significant increase in median home prices in March 2020. City dwellers have scrambled to buy homes outside of cities, where social distancing is more difficult and the risk of getting COVID-19 appears greater than it is in suburban or rural settings. That's led to a lot of competition among prospective buyers.

Prospective home buyers willing to enter the hectic fray and shop for a home during the COVID-19 outbreak may benefit from knowing what to expect as they search for their next home.

- Get ready for virtual tours. Buyers

might once have scoffed at the notion of buying a home they'd only seen in videos, but virtual tours have become the new normal in the wake of the pandemic. An April survey from the National Association of Realtors® found that home tours had declined sharply. While 98 percent of realtors reported taking clients on home tours as recently as February, that number had declined to 63 percent by April. As many regions pause their reopening plans, prospective home buyers should ready themselves for virtual tours as opposed to in-person home tours.

- Expect limited inventory. While home prices are up, many people are holding onto their homes. The NAR reports that total housing inventory at the end of May 2020 was down nearly 19 percent from the end of May 2019. Buyers will have less inventory to choose from, so those intent on buying may need to prioritize what they need in a home and focus on finding properties that can fulfill those needs.

- Expect to move quickly. Realtors have seen homes sell within days of being listed, and that has put pressure on buyers to move quickly. It also highlights the

importance of finding a home inspector before your search begins as well as a lender who can handle quick closings. Ask around for recommendations, but make sure you have these two important professionals lined up before beginning your search. Doing so will give you a better chance of buying in an unusual time.

- Make the best down payment you

can afford. A high down payment makes buyers look better no matter the state of the economy. An offer with a high down payment looks like a stronger offer, and that can make the difference between winning and losing a potential bidding war.

Buying a home during the COVID-19 outbreak presents some unique challenges to prospective buyers.

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Basements may not be go-to hang-outs during spring, summer and fall, when many homeowners spend more time on their patios and decks enjoying the great outdoors. But as winter approaches and the great outdoors becomes less welcoming, basements once again become popular places to



relax and spend time with loved ones. That's why fall is such an ideal time to address mold issues in a basement. According to WebMD, exposure to mold can irritate a person's eyes, nose, throat, and lungs. That's true whether a person is allergic to mold or not. Even people who are merely sensitive to mold can experience sneezing and runny nose, and some may even develop red eyes and skin rash if exposed to mold. Reactions are much more severe for people with mold allergies, who may experience shortness of breath or suffer from asthma attacks if exposed to mold. Molds require moisture to grow, and basements may provide ideal growing conditions for mold. Mold spores cannot grow without moisture, so dehumidifiers can help homeowners effectively reduce the risk of mold growth in their basements. WebMD advises homeowners keep indoor humidity levels, which can be measured with an inexpensive instrument known as a hygrometer, below 60 percent. In lieu of wall-to-wall carpeting in basements, install concrete floors and area rugs to make mold growth less likely. Basement floors also should be routinely inspected for leaks, as leaks can promote mold growth. Address leaks promptly if any are found.



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Types of home insulation, where to use 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 doesn't 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 percent 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.

Kitchens - continued on page 23B

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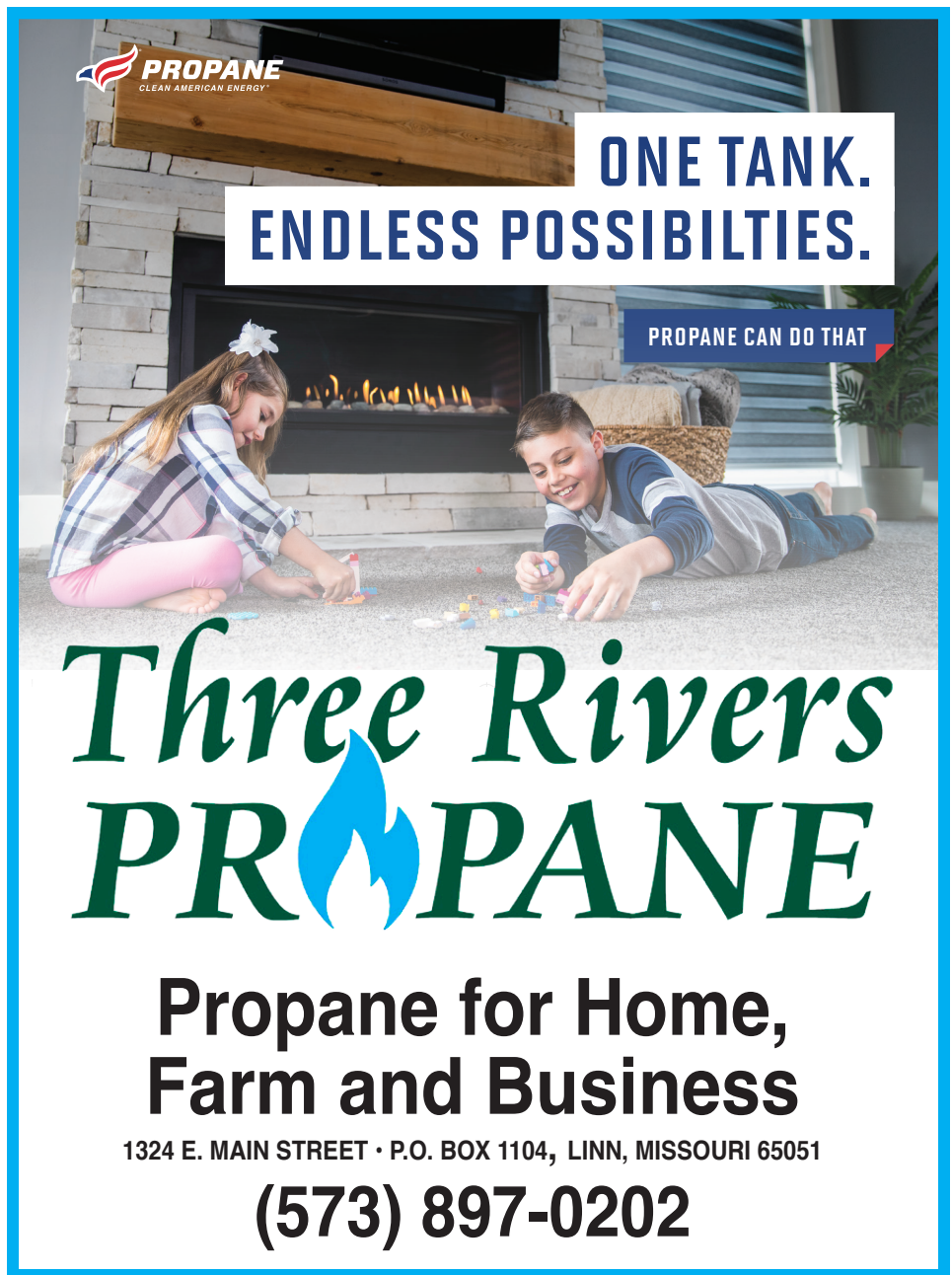
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Fall Home Improvement

WEDS., OCT. 21, 2020 ■ PAGE 23B *Unterrified Democrat*

Insulation - Continued from page 22B

In fact, the ENERGY STAR program overseen by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency says homeowners stand to save an average of 15 percent 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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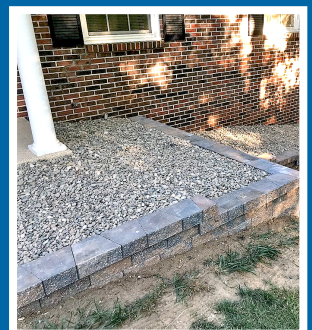
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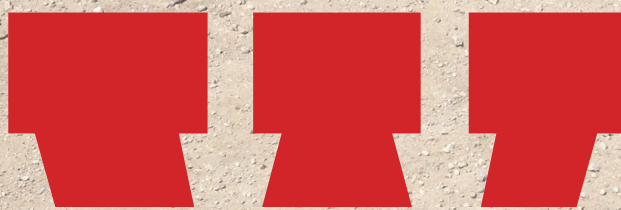
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