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AT AN OPEN house this past spring, guests enjoy inspecting and learning about a tiny home built by Patricia A. Hannaford Career Center students.

Photo courtesy of Homes First VT

Tiny homes offer one remedy for ongoing housing crisis

By ALYANA SANTILLANA
ADDISON COUNTY

— Hundreds of Vermonters are in desperate need of permanent housing and have been for a long time.

“Saying it’s been a challenge to find housing would be an understatement. I’ve been in Vermont for about 13 years and we’ve moved 15 or 16 times,” Kate Bentley told the Independent in August.

The Bristol resident is one of many Vermonters who has been affected by the housing crisis.

Frustrated by being in a constant state of limbo and at the mercy of landlords and the prospect of eviction, Bentley sought a more permanent and affordable solution for her problem: a tiny house. Tiny houses, an idea that has gained traction over the last few years amid rising costs of homeownership, is a small, stick-built mobile home that is typically smaller than 500 square feet.

The tiny house idea came about locally after a group of community members founded an organization called Home First VT in an attempt to address the issue on a grassroots level. Members include Mary Simons, Andrea Galiano, Ingrid Pixley, Jean Terwilliger, Nick Cantrick and Dutton Smith.

“It’s just sad to know that people in your community don’t have access to housing, shelter, and just the comfort and safety of having your own home. If you care enough, you’ll figure out a way to help,” Simons said.

Once they decided that tiny homes were a viable



solution, Cantrick, a Construction Technology Instructor at Patricia A. Hannaford Career Center, assigned building tiny houses as a project to his students. After two school years, the first house was complete this past school year.

“It’s one thing to build something for a class just to build it, but it’s another to know that what you did changed someone’s life. Some students even volunteered time on the weekends to build the house.”

— Mary Simons

Dimensions of first home was 30 feet long by 8.5-foot wide by 13 feet high. This size was determined by highway regulations, in order to move this to its permanent site.

Upon completion, Home First found five serious potential buyers. Various obstacles that buyers encountered prolonged the process of closing the

(See *Tiny houses*, Page 4C)

“The students loved it because it was a meaningful way to practice their skills. It’s one thing to build something for a class just to build it, but it’s another to know that what you did changed someone’s life. Some students even volunteered time on the weekends to build the house,” Simons said.

This first tiny home was designed by local architects Jean Terwilliger and Shelly Pottorf. It was built on a trailer as a traditional tiny house. Once the home is situated at its permanent site, the wheels will be removed and the home will be connected to a cement foundation.



AT AN OPEN house this past spring, guests enjoy inspecting and learning about a tiny home built by Patricia A. Hannaford Career Center students.

Photo courtesy of Homes First VT

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HANNAFORD CAREER CENTER students who learned practical carpentry skills proudly show off the tiny house they were helping build.

Photo courtesy of Homes First VT

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Tiny houses

(Continued from Page 3C)

deal. The most common barriers were finding land and financing. As of a month ago, Home First was in the process of finalizing the sale to a local 75-year-old woman who hoped to situate the house on her daughter's property.

"The hardest thing right now, other than finding people with money for the project, is finding land and places we can do septic and other things you need to place a house," Simons said.

The team hopes to begin Bentley's tiny house soon and estimates it will take about two school years to complete. While student labor is instrumental to the process, the team is seeking other volunteers to work on weekends to speed up the building process. The team also hopes to attract local partners to help find land for future builds.

"We are looking for people with land and who are interested in building an accessory dwelling unit on their property. We will do the labor of building the house and only charge material cost. They'll take on a more landlord role once the property is finished," Simons said. "We're also looking for more volunteers. We value carpentry skills, but we can really truly find something for anyone who wants to help."

For those in need of housing, a solution can't come soon enough.

About Home First VT

Homes First is a grassroots, no-profit, all-volunteer collaboration between individuals who believe that housing is a basic human need, and that our responsibility in being good neighbors is doing our best in helping to find secure housing for all members of our community.

Specifically, the 501c3 organization seeks to provide economically and environmentally sustainable, "right sized" homes to Addison County residents that are designed and funded, fully or in large part, by the community that resides alongside them. Home First participants are a cohort of community members who cultivate partnerships in order to fund, build and site right-sized, single-occupancy homes for those who cannot afford market rates, so that we all may live in Addison County.

Members are motivated by community, not profit. This is not paid work for any participants.

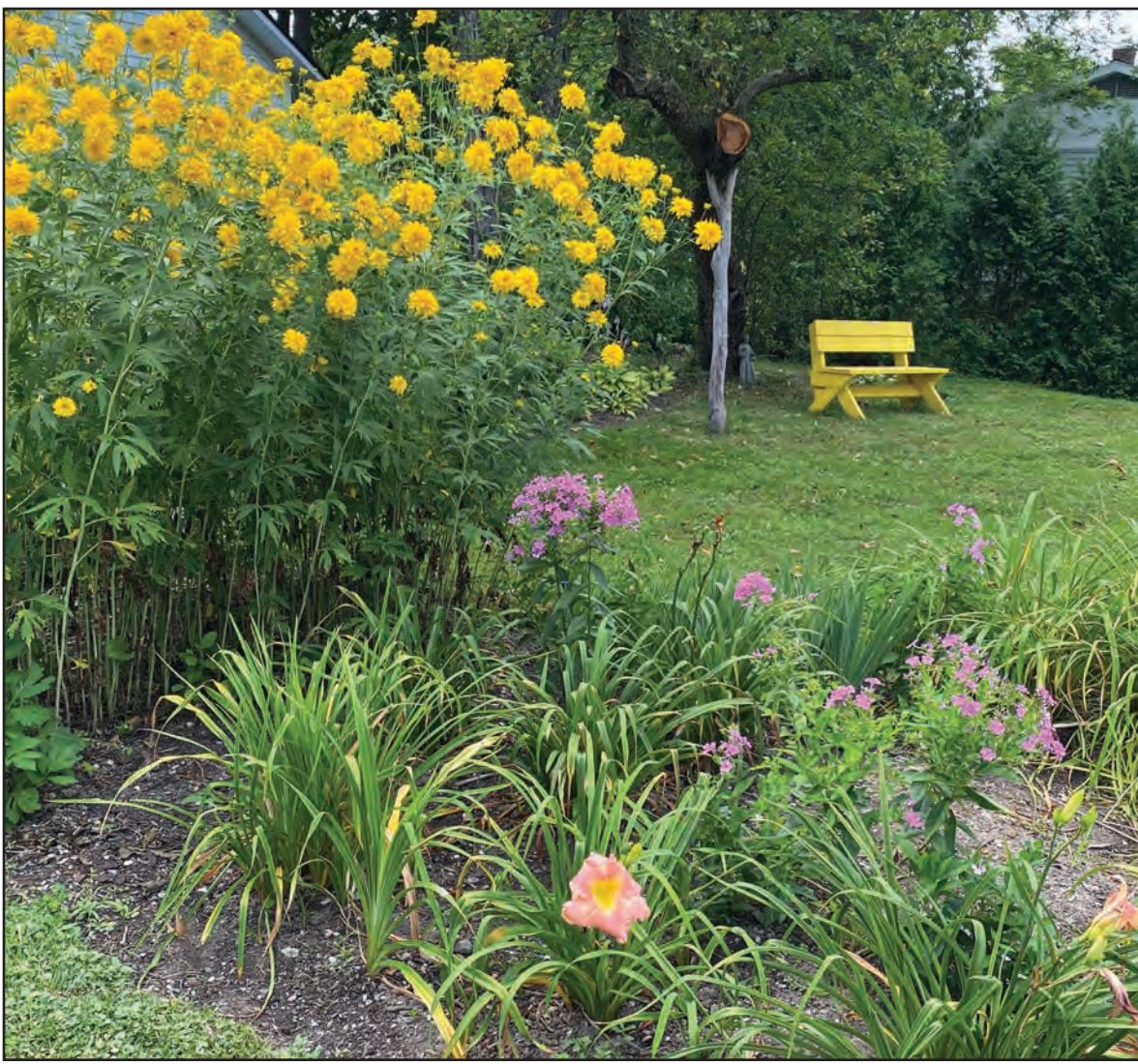
"I don't know what it's like to not have to think about housing. Will my rent increase? Would I be able to afford it? Do I need to get a second job? It's in the back of my mind every day," Bentley said.

Look for more information online at homesfirstvt.org.

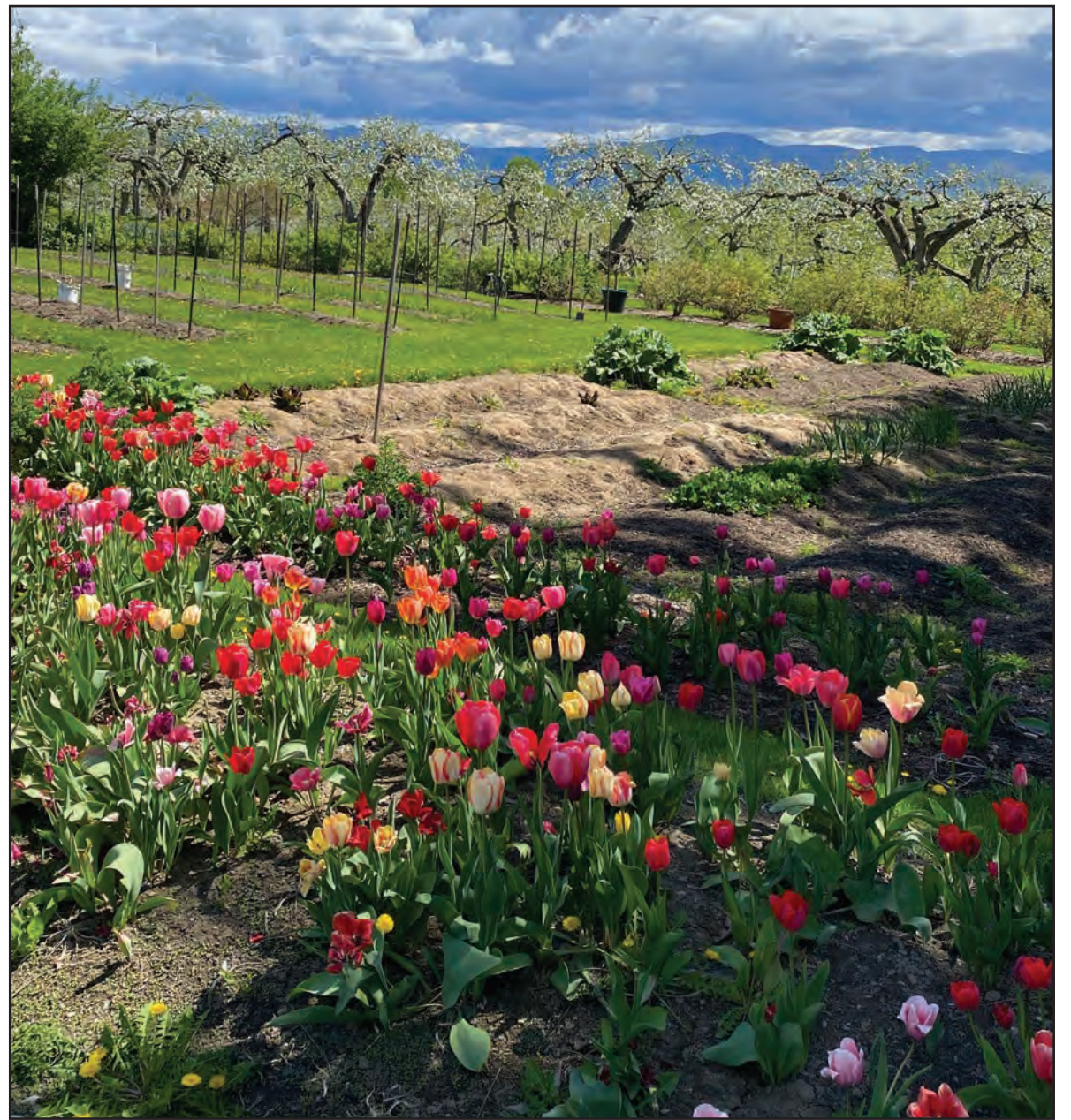


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ABI SESSIONS'S GARDEN IN WEYBRIDGE



BRAD KOEHLER'S GARDEN AT WINDFALL ORCHARD IN CORNWALL

Local gardens receive praise Addison County was stunning this year!

Story and photos provided by Elizabeth Karnes Keefe and Barbara Greenwood

Wasn't Addison County a beautiful place this past summer? Certainly the colorful and interesting gardens cultivated by local residents added to the appeal of this place.

Every year, the Middlebury Garden Club gives awards to public and private gardens in

Addison County.

The club recently announced four winners of its 2024 Roadside Attractions awards. The awards recognize beautiful gardens around Addison County in both residential and commercial settings that are visible from roadways. Each of this year's winners is unique and stunning.

The awards went to Lorraine and Fran Paquette in West Cornwall,

Abi Sessions in Weybridge, Brad Koehler of Windfall Orchard in Cornwall, and the Middlebury Natural Foods Co-op. Here are some photos and information about each winner.

The Garden of Lorraine and Fran Paquette in West Cornwall

Lorraine and Fran have lived on a quiet dirt road in West Cornwall since 1983. There they raised four children and lots of veggies. The vegetable garden helped sustain the family throughout the year.

Lorraine started by adding flowers to the vegetable garden, and then she added a separate garden just for flowers. When her health forced her to leave the workplace, she doubled the size of the flower garden.

"I enjoyed the work, which at times was a challenge, but even more felt fulfilled when the flowers bloomed," she said. "What a feeling of happiness and accomplishment. I continue to grow, reshape, experiment and enjoy my gardens."

A long list of vegetables and a vast array of flowers grow throughout the spring, summer and fall. Vegetables include asparagus, broccoli, cabbage, lettuce, spinach, radishes, potatoes, garlic, tomatoes, corn cucumbers, kohlrabi, beets, celery, onions, peas, pumpkins and squash.

The spectacular flowers include angels breath, hostas, daisies, echinacea, yarrow, black-eyed susan, lily, iris, peonies, bleeding hearts, dahlias, sweet William, hibiscus, trumpet vine, lupines, delphiniums, lavender, and a favorite, two long beds of zinnias that Lorraine and Fran grow from seeds saved from the previous summer's crop.

The Garden of Abi Sessions in Weybridge

Abi's flower garden is planted

to show color all year, from crocus in March to red-stemmed dogwood all through the winter. She likes a combination of shrubs and perennials, so the front garden has a fringe bush, a dwarf ginkgo tree, three *Itea* (sweetspire), two junipers and a new baby evergreen among the perennials. Elderberries not only feed the birds, but also provide a year-round privacy screen.

Abi says that since she planted native plants, each one "has been trying to take over the world."

At the height of summer the front garden is a battleground among echinacea, rudbeckia, bee balm and phlox. Abi notes that she was fortunate to inherit excellent

soil when she and her husband, Bill, bought their house six years ago, and it makes her happy when people walking the sidewalk enjoy the garden.

The Garden of Brad Koehler of Windfall Orchard, Cornwall

Brad Koehler, orchardist and proprietor of Windfall Orchard on Route 30, has been tending his flower and vegetable gardens for 22 years. The apple orchard, formerly belonging to well-known Middlebury surgeon Dr. Ray Collins, was rejuvenated by Brad, who has nurtured almost two dozen varieties of apples on the property.

With a great interest in the (See Gardens, Page 6C)



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Gardens

(Continued from Page 5C)

biodiversity of plants and natural pollinators including various types of bumblebees, Brad said that “flowers are my obsession.”

Driving by in the spring, you will see masses of tulips, and dozens of varieties of daffodils, alliums and glory-of-the-snow, so called because it blooms early enough that its flowers sometimes poke right out of the snow. Some of these flowers are sold at the farmstand in May. They are followed in summer by daylilies, zinnias and snapdragons.

“The flowers are mostly for our enjoyment — other than the tulips and daffodils, which I sell at my stand in May. We keep a lot of cut flowers in our house this time of year.”

Almost all of the fruit grown at Windfall is sold either at the farmstand, through accounts with restaurants, or to hard cider makers. Some of it is used to press Windfall Orchard’s own fresh sweet cider.

The Middlebury Natural Foods Co-op

Sebastian Miska and Kate Corrigan from North Branch Farm and Gardens have been doing the Middlebury Natural Foods Co-op’s landscaping work for the past several years. The gardens in the front and along the side of the Co-op contain a variety of interesting and attractive plants and flowers to greet members and visitors as they arrive at the store off Washington Street in Middlebury. Notable this year is a diminutive pineapple plant.

Middlebury Garden Club

One of the oldest garden clubs in Vermont, the Middlebury Garden Club was founded in 1933 to stimulate an interest in gardening, as well as to undertake and encourage projects to make Middlebury and surrounding areas more attractive. Among other projects, the Garden Club maintains the gardens at the Sheldon Museum.

The Garden Club plans an active calendar of events, tours, and activities. To learn more, visit middleburygardensclub.org.

Home maintenance is a big job

By ELISE SHANBACKER
Executive Director of Addison Housing Works

As fall advances and many of us are thinking about wrapping up our properties for the season ahead. It’s time to put the garden to bed, patch the porch, and repair that piece of trim under the eaves before the wasps move in to overwinter.

At Addison Housing Works (AHW), we’re busy making sure that our housing is not only affordable, but safe, decent, and well-maintained.

Addison Housing Works, formerly known as Addison County Community Trust, is a nonprofit affordable housing trust. We develop, own and manage affordable housing in Addison County, including rental apartments, mobile home parks, single-family homes, and senior housing. As such, the organization has a lot of experience maintaining homes.

Maintenance is important for obvious reasons, like health and safety. Moreover, it supports dignity and pride of place for residents who may experience stigma and even discrimination for having low incomes and residing in affordable housing. Finally, many people may not know that AHW properties are permanently affordable, meaning the organization must maintain them in perpetuity to serve future generations of low- and moderate-income Vermonters in need of affordable housing. We invest significant time and resources making sure our properties are in good condition so they don’t become lost from Addison County’s precious permanently affordable housing stock.

AHW manages and stewards more than 750 permanently affordable homes in Addison County. That includes 14 multifamily properties with 48 buildings and 353 apartments, nine manufactured housing communities (MHCs) with 340 lots for owner-occupied homes, and 75 shared equity



MAINTENANCE DIRECTOR COLBY Benjamin stands with Director of Property Management Tori Marukelli outside a historic building on Seminary Street in Middlebury after a fresh coat of paint has been applied.



A CONTRACTOR LOOKS for the source of an electrical problem in Lindale Manufactured Housing Community in Middlebury.

single-family homes and condos. In 2023 alone, AHW reinvested more than \$1.3 million into regular maintenance for our multifamily family apartment buildings and MHCs — not including a \$5 million community septic upgrade at Lindale MHC in Middlebury and a \$409,000 water system upgrade at Vaughn Court MHC in Monkton.

How do we do it? We have a dedicated property management and maintenance team as well as trusted local vendors who take on projects ranging from leaky toilets to new curb stops. Read on for a peek at what it’s like to be a maintenance tech with Addison Housing Works.

A Day in the Life of an AHW Maintenance Tech

A day might begin with a resident calling in a toilet that doesn’t flush at Weybridge Street Apartments

Home maintenance pro tips

- Did you know you can lose 200 gallons of water per day from a running toilet? That’s more than the average three-bedroom home uses in a day! The fix can be as easy as replacing the parts in your toilet tank.
- Cleaning the fins at the back of your fridge can help boost its energy efficiency!
- Changing out traditional light bulbs for LEDs is another great way to reduce your electric bills.

— Addison County Housing Works

in Middlebury. Maintenance Supervisor Donnie Wall enters the work order and dispatches Maintenance Tech Ben Kivlen to assess the issue. Arriving at the property, it appears an alarm on the sewer pump station is going off — the pump is jammed! What appeared to be a simple call now requires a call to a licensed professional to fix the pump. Even when a pro is called in, AHW’s maintenance team is there to help, whatever it takes — in this case, it took going headfirst into a sewer pit to investigate a malfunctioning sewer pump!

While it isn’t every day we have to get down and dirty with septic systems (though perhaps more often than you’d think), renovating a unit between tenants is something we do every day — in fact, we did it 35 times in 2023 alone, at an average cost of about \$6,000 per unit. A typical turnover at a minimum involves a fresh coat

of paint and a deep clean. Often, we replace old carpet with more durable vinyl plank flooring — this comes at a higher up-front cost, but pays off with a longer lifespan and reduced wear and tear. The punch list of a unit turnover also frequently includes things like tub resurfacing, drywall repairs, new stove heating elements, repairing baseboard hot water covers, replacing broken bath fixtures, down to the “Sparkle Inspection” — that’s the thing Alice Quesnel performs before leasing up a new tenant. It includes things like making sure the oven light works and the fans have been dusted.

Preventative maintenance is of course an important focus of the maintenance team as well. For example, every year (and after storms, as needed) we walk properties to identify trees that might be a threat to residents and properties. Given the increasing

(See Maintenance, Page 7C)

Year-Round Hazardous Waste Collection

The HazWaste Center at the District Transfer Station in Middlebury is open to residents from any of the District’s member towns.

Most items are accepted from residents free of charge.

Businesses must pay for disposal and must call 388-2333 for an appointment.

Common items include:

Acetone	Drainer opener/cleaner	Mercury thermometers	Primers or shellacs
Acids	Driveway sealer	Mercury thermostats	Rechargeable batteries
Adhesives	Dry cleaning solvents	Mineral spirits	Roach traps/poison
Algaecides	Flea & tick killer	Mothballs	Rug/upholstery cleaner
Aerosols	Fluorescent bulbs*	Motor oil	Solvent-based glues
Antifreeze	Fly killer	Mouse/rat poison	Stains
Ant killer	Formaldehyde	Nail polish	Stump remover
Ammonia	Fuel additives	Nail polish remover	Tars or resins
Auto body filler	Fungicides	Naphtha	Transmission fluid
Automotive fluids	Furniture polish	Oil-based paint	Tub & tile cleaner
Chlorine bleach	Gasoline	Oily waste	Varnish
Brake fluid	Hair dyes	Oven cleaner	Weed killer/fertilizer
Bug spray	Kerosene	Paint thinner/turpentine	Wood preservative
Button cell batteries	Latex paint	Parts cleaner	
Contact cement	Lead paint chips	Pesticides/herbicides	
Deck sealer	Lead-acid batteries	Photographic chemicals	
Diesel fuel	Lime/rust remover	Pool chemicals	

Household hazardous waste includes any unused product that is poisonous, reactive, corrosive, or flammable.

You can easily identify hazardous products by reading packaging labels. Look for key words such as **Warning!** **Danger!** **Poison!** **Caution!**

Improper disposal of these products poses a risk to human health and the environment.

*All compact fluorescents (CFLs) are accepted at no cost; other types of general purpose fluorescent bulbs are free to recycle in quantities of 10 or fewer per day. A per-bulb nominal fee applies for more than 10.

Not accepted: laboratory chemicals, pharmaceuticals, fireworks, flares, explosives, smoke detectors, ammunition, and radioactive waste.

HazWaste Center Hours of Operation:

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BEN KIVLEN (LEFT), Donnie Wall (right) and a tech from J&A Pump investigate a malfunctioning sewer pump at Weybridge Street Apartments.

Maintenance

(Continued from Page 6C)

frequency and severity of storms we're experiencing due to climate change, this activity is absolutely essential to ensuring safety at our properties. We were very lucky that tree damage from the windstorms this past January mostly missed residents' homes and cars, but in the wake of that event, we completed \$20,000 in tree removal at Lindale and identified \$20,000 more in needed tree removal at KTP in Bristol. Otter Creek MHC in Vergennes earlier this year had 97 trees identified for removal; 70 of those were ash trees, which have become blighted by the emerald ash borer.

In addition to preventative maintenance, work orders and unit turnovers, AHW's maintenance team also handles large capital projects at our properties. In 2023, we completed a nearly \$100,000 project at Stone Hill on Court Street in Middlebury to improve drainage around the foundation, which was experiencing significant ice penetration into the garage. This year, we are completing road paving projects in several of our manufactured housing communities (MHCs), including Brookside in Starksboro and Otter Creek in

Vergennes.

Finally, some projects go above and beyond the normal scope of maintenance, and require a team of developers and project managers to complete—such as the new Lindale community septic system serving 67 homes in Middlebury, which took more than five years to develop at a cost of over \$5 million. The new system improves health and safety at the park, which suffered for years from surfacing effluent, and benefits all of us who live in the Lake Champlain watershed by properly treating discharge before it reaches our waterways.

Our maintenance team gets it all done, providing service 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, and they do it with a smile and a kind word for residents. One resident at Pete Coe Village Apartments says, "The Maintenance staff is great, they never make me feel ashamed of my space and never make me feel like I am bothering them." Even when they're putting out (sometimes literal) fires, they make time to go the extra mile, helping fill raised beds with topsoil at our community gardens, installing new signs at our properties, sharing a kind word with a resident, and helping set up and take down for our fundraising

event every year.

Even if you don't know how to replace a lightbulb, let alone a smoke detector, kitchen hose or rotten clapboard, you can still get involved with Addison Housing Works and help us provide safe, quality, affordable housing to more than 1,000 of our Addison County friends and neighbors—including families, seniors, children, individuals and their four-legged friends and support animals. For example:

- Join your town's Housing Committee if they have one, and if not, encourage them to explore creating one.
- Show your support at public hearings for new housing development in your community.
- Join a Planning Commission or Development Review Board in your town.
- Come to AHW's events, like the 35th Anniversary Celebration we hosted in Bristol this past Sept. 13.
- Become a sustaining donor at www.addisonhousingworks.org/donate where you can help ensure Addison County continues to have a strong local housing trust that cares deeply about our residents and the quality of our properties.

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Survey: Pellet stove owners love their stoves and are interested in heat pumps

The Alliance for Green Heat has reported that a survey taken by 486 people who use pellet stoves revealed some predictable and some unpredictable results. For instance, an overwhelming majority of pellet stove owners, 85%, said they would buy another pellet stove if theirs broke and 90% say their stove is reliable or very reliable, challenging a perception that pellet stoves are not very dependable.

Pellet stoves are cleaner and more efficient than wood stoves and make up 25% of the stove market in New England, and 10% nationally, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration. Until recently, likely around five years ago, American homes still made more renewable energy from wood and pellets than they did from residential solar photovoltaics, which have since surged past wood and pellet heat.

The survey was undertaken between April and June of 2024 by the Alliance for Green Heat, an independent non-profit. AGH chose the Survey Monkey platform and circulated it through scores of social media pages, newsletters and neighborhood listservs. Thus, the survey is not rigorously scientific and likely over-represents pellet stove enthusiasts. Keeping that in mind, the data offers a glimpse into an important demographic of pellet stove users. By segmenting the data, ACH was also able to compare the views and values and pellet stove users based on income, region, motivation to buy a pellet stove and other characteristics.

Of this group, 61% of the 486 respondents used their stoves for primary heat and in the future 38% were interested in buying heat pumps and 33% were interested in buying solar panels. Unlike households adopting solar panels, the primary reason homes adopt pellet stoves is for the substantial short-term cost saving. In the survey, all income groups except one listed "saving money" as the most common reason to heat with pellets.

Twenty-six percent of households with pellet stoves displaced electric heat (both resistance and heat pumps), 20% displaced oil, and 18% displaced wood, 16% displaced propane and 13% displaced gas. This, along with several other questions, showed a high crossover with wood and pellet stoves, as many households that used to heat with wood have moved to pellet heat. In some cases, the reverse also happens with homes moving from pellets to wood fuel.

The median annual household income group was \$75,000-\$99,000, higher than the national median (\$74,580), and significantly lower than the median average income of homes with solar panels (\$117,000 in 2022). The number of people per household was close to the national average with an average of 2.58. The national average is 2.51.

The survey also asked if pellet stove owners smelled smoke from their stoves and 17% said they did, and 52% said they didn't. In between those groups, 30% said they only smelled it during start-up which in most homes is no more than once a day.

Survey respondents were from across the country, with respondents from every state except five, mostly in the deep south. The top five states were New Hampshire (10% of responses), Massachusetts (9%) and New York (9%), California (6%) and Pennsylvania (6%). Countries outside of the U.S. had 7% of responses.

Scores of state and national studies show that small scale wood and pellet heat is enormously important to the transition away from fossil fuels both here and throughout Europe, in part because it does not strain the grid in the winter, and complements available renewable electricity.

Pellet heating has grown, but public education lags, and there remains a lot of confusion about the export of pellets to make electricity versus the use of pellets for domestic heating.



BUMBLEBEE QUEENS ARE important pollinators, so consider leaving leaves in flower beds for them to nest under during the winter when cleaning up the yard in the fall.

Photo by Amy Simone

Seed heads transform into happy homes

By AMY SIMONE
UVM Extension Master Gardener

Autumn colors are painting the landscape. As beautiful as those reds, oranges and yellows are, many gardeners tend to focus too much on the formerly green perennials that are now a crispy brown.

What may seem ugly to you, however, is a happy winter home for a beneficial insect or food for an overwintering bird. Therefore, try your best to only remove what is really necessary.

Wait for a few hard frosts to occur and then assess the plants in your yard. Perennials with foliage that is browned or blackened, like peonies, daylilies and speedwell should be removed. Hosta plants should be cut back and all foliage removed to avoid harboring slug eggs over the winter.

In the vegetable garden, clean up

can be thorough. Pests that plagued your crops this year may overwinter in the plant debris so clean that out. Likewise, pull weeds now before they become established.

Diseased perennials are the last category of plants to remove. Bee balm and phlox are often victims of powdery mildew. Even if they were not afflicted this year, cutting them back will help avoid that next season.

Remember to put any diseased plant parts in the garbage or bury them but not in the compost, unless your compost pile is active and reaches temperatures above 131 degrees Fahrenheit for at least four hours. Be sure to clean your tools and gloves after handling them.

Beyond that, many perennials can — and should — be left standing in your landscape. Low-growing evergreen or semi-evergreen perennials like hardy geraniums, heucheras, moss phlox, dianthus and hellebores should not be cut back.

Marginally hardy perennials such as garden mums and anise hyssop also will be better protected if left standing during the winter. The



THE SEED HEADS of flowering perennials such as the coneflower are a good source of food for overwintering birds.

Photo by Amy Simone

plants will collect leaves and snow, providing them with insulation and moisture.

What else should you leave in place? Plants that will provide winter interest such as ornamental grasses. They will flutter in the late fall breeze and then offer three-dimensional beauty to your snow-covered landscape. The grasses can be cut down in the spring once

new growth appears.

Keep any cut or broken stems in the flower bed to provide a winter habitat for beneficial insects. Hollow stems offer a place for native bees to nest and other insects to lay their eggs.

Flowering perennials such as black-eye Susan, purple coneflower, Joe-pye weed and stonecrop contain seeds that can sustain overwintering birds. In addition, leaving these plants standing allows them to catch leaves, giving them extra insulation.

Speaking of leaves, don't be in such a hurry to rake them up and put them in the compost pile. Leaves are an excellent insulator on your flower beds, or they can be mulched on the grass with a mower. They are also important habitat for woolly bear caterpillars and provide protection for the bumblebee queen who burrows into the soil under a cover of leaves.

As you gaze out at your "messy" fall landscape, know how much the birds, bees and beneficials appreciate you.



PLANTS SUCH AS this bee balm with powdery mildew should be cut down and disposed of in the garbage.

Photo by Amy Simone

Kittredge Land Surveying, PLLC Seth W. Kittredge, L.S.

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Mulling a garage renovation

Garages may rank below kitchens and bathrooms in the home renovation pecking order, but these unsung heroes of suburban dwellings deserve their day in the sun. It's easy for garages to become convenient, if crowded and disorganized, storage spaces, but scores of homeowners are embracing the idea that renovated garages can serve a more functional purpose.

Prior to beginning a garage renovation, homeowners can consider a host of factors that will guide the direction of the project and ultimately produce a more functional space.

- **Appeal:** Though many homeowners understandably want to ensure their homes are amenable to their own lifestyles without worrying about the effects a given project might have on resale value, it's best that they do not completely ignore the latter variable. A 2019 analysis from the National Association of Home Builders found that 65% of newly constructed homes included two-car garages. That suggests a traditional two-car garage remains widely appealing. However, it's worth noting that the NAHB analysis was conducted prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, when fewer people were working from home. Now that more people work from home, some may see a garage converted into a home office space as more functional. Homeowners can speak with a local real estate agent to learn more about local buyers' preferences before beginning a garage renovation project.

How much does the renovation cost?

Several factors will ultimately determine the final price of a garage remodel, but HomeAdvisor says the national average for a garage remodel falls between \$6,000 and \$26,000. Most homeowners come in at around \$15,000 for a total garage conversion.

- **Function of the space:** It's important to consider why you want to renovate the garage. Is it to build a designated home office space? A fully outfitted home gym? A home theater? An extra bedroom? An in-laws suite? Each of these options are popular reasons to renovate a garage, and each may require a different approach during the project. The desired function also may affect the cost, so it's best to identify precisely what the room will be used for post-renovation.

- **The existing space:** When mulling a garage renovation, contact a local garage conversion expert to audit the space. Such a professional can assess the existing space and determine what will need to be done beyond the design of the room. Will additional electrical outlets need to be installed? Will the room require additional ventilation? Will a new doorway need to be created to allow for easier access? These are questions a qualified expert can answer. Some may estimate the cost as well, but

it's likely the garage expert will defer estimates regarding electric and ventilation to contractors who specialize in those areas.

- **Storage:** Some home renovation experts estimate that the average garage remodel costs around \$18,000. That's considerably less than a home addition project, which can easily exceed six figures. So a garage remodel might be more budget-friendly than a room addition. However, homeowners should consider what's currently in their garages and where those items will end up if the room is repurposed. If it's primarily lawn care items and kids' toys, a new shed with ample storage space might work. But if the garage currently holds more items than can reasonably fit in a shed, homeowners should determine where those items can be stored once the garage is repurposed.

- **Lighting:** Installing more windows or improving on the lighting in the garage can be important. Window installation enables people to circulate air in the garage without having to open the garage door. Improving the lighting means the garage can still be enjoyed or used after dark. Spread out lighting in the garage, and use a combination of overhead and task lighting just as one would in the home itself.

Garage renovation projects can make these spaces more functional, making them worthy of consideration among homeowners who feel like they need some additional space at home.

— Metro Creative

Are formal dining rooms old school?

Formal dining rooms were once a must-have in homes, but that popularity has waned in recent decades. Dining rooms were the spaces to host holiday dinners or family birthday parties. Slowly but surely, dining rooms became obsolete in modern homes that favored open-concept layouts.

And in those homes that had formal dining areas, the need for home office spaces or playrooms for children saw many dining

rooms repurposed. According to the National Association of Home Builders, 43% of millennials prefer the look and feel of an open-concept layout and casual dinner parties.

However, even though dining rooms may no longer be de rigueur, designers are noticing an increase in clients requesting formal dining spaces, according to a report in *Southern Living*. Perhaps it's a matter of open-concept fatigue.

After spending a year or more during the height of the pandemic at home with few to no barriers between rooms, homeowners may be looking for homes that carve out niches for specific tasks (and privacy) once more.

It may not be long until homes come back to including more traditional layouts with separate dining spaces to make hosting a little more intimate. Time will tell.

— Metro Creative



Help with the roof

VOLUNTEERS WITH HABITAT for Humanity of Addison County and employees from Naylor & Breen (and office workers and N&B President Tanner Romero pitch in!) watch in early September as the roof trusses go up on the first of four new homes that the organization is constructing off Gorham Lane in Middlebury. Habitat has had the site excavated and graded, and two foundations have been poured.

With the exterior walls up, Naylor & Breen arrived with an expert crew, including a very large crane, to raise the trusses and sheath the roof.

Habitat officials said Romero and his crew ensured a safe and professional process, but they also allowed the organization's somewhat older volunteers to remain safely on terra firma.

Photo by Kathy Purcell

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Pollinators like messy fall gardens

By JUDITH SIEGEL & HOLLY FULTON

Fall is here, are you dreading all the garden and yard clean up that comes with it?

The good news is that you don't have to do all that work. You can cut back significantly on the amount of work that you do and help our pollinators and other beneficial insects at the same time. Pollinating insects are in decline and need these places to hide, reproduce, winter-over and live to pollinate our plants and food.

Did you know that in Vermont our native bees nest in the ground, in wood piles, and in hollow stems of perennials like bee balm, sunflowers and goldenrod?

What can you do instead of a traditional fall yard clean up? Join the "re-wilding" effort to conserve habitat, increase soil health and bolster biodiversity. Don't cut down last season's old stems. Leave the leaf litter where you can. Where the leaves could smother your lawn, rake fallen leaves into beds, borders and under trees, but don't shred them. Leaves retain moisture like mulch and protect insects and their eggs.

For more details, watch the presentation by Xerces Society entomologist Emily May on "Fall Gardening for Pollinators — Leave the Leaves"; it's online at tinyurl.com/MessyFall.

Wildlife likes it messy!

Native Seed collection workshop set

Pollinator Pathway of Addison County presents Tobi Schulman, owner of Bird and Bee Native Plants in Jericho, to lead a Native Seed Collecting Workshop on Saturday, Oct. 12, 1-3 p.m. in Weybridge.

Schulman will demonstrate techniques for identifying, responsibly collecting, cleaning and storing pollinator plant seeds



LEAVE BEEBALM PLANTS like these in your garden and yard and they could provide a winter home for pollinators.

Photo courtesy of Jill Vickers

native to our area. Each attendee will leave with a selection of seeds for sowing later in our winter season.

The workshop will be held in rain or shine so come dressed appropriately for the weather and with footwear suitable for walking on uneven terrain in a meadow. Materials will be provided.

However, if you have a metal bowl and sieve, please bring both as having additional materials on site will reduce wait time.

Registration limit 20 participants, suggested donation \$5-\$10. To register, contact Fran Putnam at franputnam24@gmail.com. The location of the workshop and directions to the site will be

sent when registration has been completed.

The workshop and Tobi Schulman are sponsored by the Pollinator Pathway of Addison County with a generous grant from Neat Repeats. For more information contact pollinatorpathway.addisoncty@gmail.com.

Is a ductless heat pump right for you?

A heat pump helps you to maintain a comfortable temperature in your home year-round. These units use less energy than many other heating and cooling systems such as baseboard electric heat, propane, or oil, Efficiency Vermont reports. As with any heating and cooling option, you'll want to consider your home's unique setup and layout to determine if a ductless heat pump is right for you.

Will they work in a cold climate (like Vermont's)?

Heat pumps can handle most of the heating needs of homes in Vermont. Like most heating systems, the colder it is outside, the harder it works. Cold-climate heat pumps can handle temperatures as low as -15 degrees F. We recommend that you have a supplemental heat source (e.g., furnace or boiler, stove or fireplace, or central wood heat) as a backup for the coldest days of the year. During periods of lower temperatures, you can use your supplemental source to make up the difference. When installing a new ductless heat pump, consider adding integrated controls, which can coordinate the operation of the heat pump with your supplemental heat for best savings and comfort.

Do you have an open floor plan or multiple zones?

Homes with an open floor plan, where large spaces are well connected, are good for heat pumps. In a small home or business with an open floor plan, one or two ductless heat pump units can displace most of your heating fuel use and save you money.

For larger spaces and those with enclosed rooms, multiple units are needed—one for each room or zone. Locate the heat pump in the most open part of the home and keep doors open to increase the impact of the ductless heat pump.

Is your home properly air sealed and insulated?

Consider your insulation and air sealing before installing a ductless heat pump. Improving the thermal efficiency of the building will maximize the effectiveness of the heat pump and reduce the use of supplemental heat. Eliminating

drafts and increasing insulation are affordable improvements that pay for themselves.

Is your home's electrical panel up-to-date?

Switching to a heat pump is an electric load increase that could mean panel upgrades. This is also a consideration if you are thinking about a heat pump water heater, electric clothes dryer or stove, or electric vehicle charging at home. Your electrical service has a limit on how much electricity it can deliver to your house. To accommodate a heat pump in your home, you may or may not need to upgrade your electrical panel. Even in older homes, your existing electrical service may be adequate for the addition of a heat pump. If you live in a home less than 50 years old, your home is likely capable of handling a bigger electrical load.

Be sure to ask your contractor whether your home's electrical service can handle the extra load.

The good news is: The Inflation Reduction Act offers income-based rebates and tax credits to help cut the costs of an upgrade.

Will you save money when you have a heat pump?

Heat-pump savings depend on what fuel you are switching from, how much your electricity costs, and how well the ductless heat pump satisfies the heat demand of your home. If you have baseboard electric heat or typically more expensive heating fuels, like propane or oil, the savings can be significant. While your electric bill will increase, it will be offset by a decrease in the costs of more expensive fuels. If you're switching from natural gas, wood, or pellets, a heat pump may not lower your heating bills. Consider the upfront price of the system, as well as long-term operating costs, when deciding on a heat pump installation.

Interested in installing a heat pump at home?

Efficiency Vermont provides an incentive when you work with one of our participating HVAC distributors. Installing a ductless heat pump may also qualify for Federal tax credits and rebates.

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Make renovations go smoothly

Homeowners are spending big bucks on home renovations. According to the Joint Center for Housing Studies at Harvard University, home improvement project spending continues to increase. It's predicted to go from \$472 billion spent in 2022 to \$485 billion in 2024.



the budget no matter what comes down the pike.

• **Assemble a good team.** Thoroughly research all contractors who will be involved with the renovation. These include designers, architects, builders, and more. Be sure they come highly recommended and research online reviews. A good team removes some stress from the project because you'll know the work is in experienced hands.

Prepare for worst-case scenarios by adding anywhere from 1% to 20% to the budget. Commit to sticking to the budget no matter what comes down the pike.

• **Prepare the space for the remodel.** Any work you can do will help save on labor costs and make it easier for the team to get started on the project. Clear out clutter and personal items. Ask if it would be helpful for you to handle some demolition, whether

Those targeting a specific home renovation likely know there is much that goes into the process from start to finish. Patience is a requisite virtue with any remodel, as even a thoroughly conceptualized plan can encounter a few bumps along the way. Although there is no way to completely remove renovation-related obstacles, there are ways to make projects go more smoothly.

• **Establish a clear plan from the beginning.** Now is not the time to be on the fence about details. A vision for the renovation is essential, and should include details about layout, materials, colors and design.

• **Manage your expectations.** Again, this speaks to a need for patience with a project but also involves flexibility. Being too rigid when choosing materials can require waiting for back-ordered supplies to come in. Wanting contractors to bend to your schedule can delay the project even further. Creativity and flexibility are key.

• **Establish a budget.** It can be easy to spend beyond one's means, especially when issues crop up. Black House Real Estate stresses the importance of creating a budget before starting a renovation, which may involve working with a local professional to help. Prepare for worst-case scenarios by adding anywhere from 1% to 20% to the budget. Commit to sticking to

that's pulling up old tile, removing drywall or another task.

• **Have an escape hatch at the ready.** Home renovations can cause upheaval to daily life, and that can mean stress on top of already chaotic schedules. If money and situation allow, plan a getaway during a particularly tough stretch of the project so the noise, mess, and disruptions will not induce headaches. Consider spending a few nights at a hotel or a friend or relative's house to escape the constant grind of the project.

Home renovation projects add value and functionality to homes. Such undertakings can go more smoothly with some sound planning.

— Metro Creative



Unimpeded view

VAPOR BARRIER IS partially installed on this Habitat for Humanity home going up on Gorham Lane in Middlebury, but with no windows and only half a roof, a lot of vapor will still make it inside — for now.

Independent photos/
John S. McCright

5 signs it's time to renovate

Homeowners renovate their homes for a variety of reasons. Renovations can increase the value of a property and make homes safer and more comfortable for their occupants. Improvements also can be made to stay current with the times or to give a home a new vibe.

Statista projects \$510 billion will be spent on home improvements in 2024. The home improvement market is generating significant revenue. In fact, nearly a quarter of Americans opting to renovate their homes will spend an average of \$10,000 on their projects. According to a Home Stars Renovation report, 8% of Canadian homeowners who have renovated have spent more than \$20,000 on a home improvement project.

Kitchens and bathrooms often get the most attention when it comes to home improvement. However, every room and space in a home may need a renovation at some point, and the following are five signs it's time to renovate.

1. Age

The National Association of Home Builders states that 50% of U.S. homes are over the age of 40. That means that age alone could dictate a need to renovate, particularly if some materials are original to the home. For example, asphalt roofs typically last 25 to 30 years, while window frames can last 20 to 50 years depending on how well they have been maintained.

2. Inconvenient layout

Some homeowners scratch their

heads when faced with awkward floor plan layouts. While one may live with the inconvenience for some time, typically a floor plan that isn't working for the homeowner is a major driver of renovations.

3. Outdated looks

A home can look dated even if it is a relatively recent build. That's because trends change quickly. For example, dark, cherry cabinets that were popular just a little while ago have now been replaced by lighter color palettes. Homeowners whose homes do not match the looks emulated in design magazines may consider a change, particularly if they're planning to sell soon.

4. Deterioration

Signs of water, storm or structural (See *It's time*, Page 12C)

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3 modern kitchen features

It's well documented that kitchens are the most popular rooms in many homes. Kitchens are where families tend to congregate during holiday celebrations, and many a child has tackled their homework as mom or dad prepares dinner just a few steps away.

With so much time spent in the kitchen, it's no wonder kitchen renovations are popular. In fact, data from the National Association of Home Builders indicates kitchens are the most popular room to remodel. Whether homeowners are planning a full scale remodel or a few tweaks to update the room, the following are three popular features of modern kitchens.

1. Kitchen island

A recent survey from the interior design experts at Houzz found that kitchen islands are popular for a variety of reasons. Fifty-eight percent of respondents indicated they enjoy eating at kitchen islands, while 49% reported they like islands for entertaining. Forty-five percent of respondents like socializing around kitchen islands. Islands provide a versatile

functionality that comes in handy when preparing meals on typical weeknights and when hosting friends and family on special occasions like the holidays and birthdays. Islands come in a variety of shapes and sizes and can be customized to fit just about any space. Mobile islands can be utilized in small kitchens when homeowners want the extra prep space but think the kitchen would be too cramped if a permanent island were added.

2. Deep sink

The popularity of farmhouse style sinks is proof that large and deep sinks are sought-after among today's homeowners. Farmhouse sinks may be best suited to a particular aesthetic, but a 2021 study from the National Association of Home Builders found that side-by-side double sinks and walk-in pantries were the most popular of 30 listed kitchen features. That study surveyed more than 3,200 recent and prospective home buyers. Deep sinks are especially useful for people who love to cook, making them a solid addition to

any kitchen where home chefs ply their trade most nights of the week.

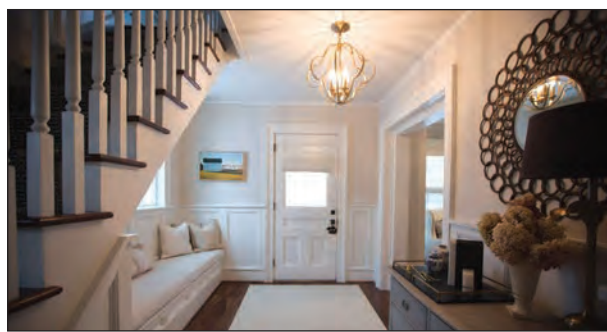
3. Storage

As the NAHB study indicated, kitchen storage space is sought after among modern homeowners. As home cooks expand their culinary horizons and cook more elaborate meals, they need extra places to store specialty pots and pans, ingredients and other materials. Homeowners looking to add more storage in the kitchen can consult with a local contractor about how to create such space. A walk-in pantry can do the trick, but homeowners with kitchens where space is more limited may need to get a little more creative. Sliding-door pantries and roll-out shelving in existing cabinets can add functional space in kitchens with close quarters.

Modern kitchens are visual marvels and highly functional spaces. A new island, a deep sink and some extra storage space can help homeowners transform their existing kitchens into spaces that cater to their every need.

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It's time

(Continued from Page 11C) damage should be addressed as soon as possible. Any deterioration should be a strong indicator that it's time to renovate.

5. Efficiency

Escalating utility bills could be

indicative of an inefficient home. Homeowners can conduct energy audits and then improve the areas where energy loss may be occurring, such as windows, doors, siding, and insulation.

Homeowners can renovate their

homes when they see fit, but various signs may warn that it's time consider updating or remodeling a home.

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Signs your bathroom needs work

Homeowners know that the work involved to maintain a home is never done. The end of one project has a tendency to roll into the planning of another, and so it goes for years on end.

Fortunate are the homeowners who get to choose when to begin a renovation project, but it's far more common that homeowners spot an issue and then realize it's time to renovate. When it comes to bathrooms, which can be among the more expensive spaces to renovate in a home, homeowners can keep an eye out for various signs suggesting the room needs a remodel.

- **Mold and mildew:** Mold and mildew is perhaps the most glaring sign a bathroom needs to be renovated or remodeled. Mold and mildew pose a notable threat to human health, as the United States Environmental Protection Agency reports that molds can cause allergic reactions. Individuals sensitive to mold may develop symptoms that mimic reactions to outdoor allergens like pollen, including sneezing, runny nose, red eyes, and dermatitis (skin rash). Mold also can trigger asthma attacks in people allergic to mold who have the condition. Mold can grow in poorly ventilated bathrooms, such as those without a fan or ones in which fans are not working properly. Mold and mildew will return if it's merely scrubbed away, so the underlying



Metro Creative photo

cause of mold must be addressed to prevent its return.

- **Small signs of fading:** Stains, peeling paint, cracked paint, and gaps in grout are small signs of fading that indicate a bathroom is in need of renovation if not a complete remodel. These issues also can serve as warning signs of larger issues, such as water issues and structural problems, so they should not be merely written off as minor problems or eyesores.

- **Rising water bills:** Some signs a bathroom could use a little TLC are not necessarily confined to the room itself. If water bills are rising significantly and do not align with price increases or an uptick in

water consumption, homeowners may have leaking pipes. Such pipes might be beneath a bathroom sink or behind tiled walls. Discoloration on the walls, peeling paint or wallpaper and/or a musty odor may indicate leaks inside a bathroom wall. If coupled with rising water bills, these signs could be indicative of a significant issue that requires immediate attention.

- **Issues with tiles:** Cracked or damaged tiles in the shower and bathtub or even on the floor are unsightly and also pose a safety hazard. Cracked floor tiles can lead to slips and falls, which can be especially harmful to older residents. And cracked tiles within

the shower and tub area can indicate water problems behind the walls or general disrepair. Such issues should be addressed before they escalate into something larger.

- **A dated vibe:** Of course, some issues affecting a bathroom are not necessarily health or safety hazards but more an affront to homeowners' grasp of current styles and trends. If walking into a bathroom unintentionally feels like stepping backward into a bygone era, then it's probably time to consider a renovation or remodeling job.

Various signs can indicate to homeowners it's time to consider a bathroom renovation.

— Metro Creative



Metro Creative photo

Create more kitchen storage

If home is where the heart is, then the kitchen is where that heart spends most of its time. Kitchens are where family and friends tend to congregate during holiday celebrations, and many a homework assignment has been completed at a kitchen island while parents prepare dinner.

The popularity of kitchens is reflected in the attention these rooms get from renovation-minded homeowners. Data from the National Association of Home Builders indicates kitchens are the most popular room to remodel. Upgrading kitchen storage is a popular renovation project, and it's also one that has practical appeal. Adding more storage in the kitchen gives the room a more organized feel, which can make preparing meals more enjoyable and create space when hosting and guests inevitably congregate around an island. With those benefits in mind, would-be organizers can consider these strategies to create more storage space in the kitchen.

- **Take stock of the spice rack.** Creating more storage space does not necessarily have to involve tools like screwdrivers, hammers and nails. Spice racks can easily become overcrowded as amateur cooks expand their culinary repertoire. A crowded spice rack inevitably spills out onto the surrounding countertop. Take stock of the spice rack and discard any spices or seasonings you haven't used in a while. This can create a more organized look and free up extra counter space.

- **Make a digital cookbook.** If your go-to recipes are filling

a binder or two, those binders are almost certainly taking up precious storage space. Scan printed recipes and convert your physical recipe collection into a digital cookbook you store on a tablet.

- **Install roll-out shelving in the pantry.** Roll-out shelving puts the entire pantry to use. Without such shelving, items are destined to be relegated to that nether region known as the back of the pantry. Some items never emerge from this area, as cooks forget they're there and then purchase duplicates, which inevitably contributes to storage issues. Roll-out shelving ensures all items in the pantry can be found and greatly reduces the likelihood that cooks will have lots of duplicate items taking up precious kitchen space.

- **Remove single-use gadgets from the kitchen.** Much like spices and seasonings vital to the preparation of specialty meals have a tendency to be used just once, kitchen gadgets that lack versatility have a way of gathering dust and taking up storage space. Whether it's a popcorn maker, a seldom-used gadget that's used infrequently, if at all, store single-use gadgets in the garage or another area of the house where they won't get in the way or contribute to a less-than-organized look in the room.

A handful of simple strategies can help anyone create more storage space in the kitchen.

— Metro Creative

Nature in home design

Outdoor living spaces were prioritized during the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, when public gatherings were greatly limited and individuals were urged to stay home as much as possible. Such demands have had a ripple effect on various industries, including home design. According to a survey conducted by the New Home Trends Institute in collaboration with Pro Builder, 58% of the more than 300 residential architects, designers and design-minded builders who participated said connection to the outdoors/nature will be an important influence on their design choices in the years to come. In addition, 45% of respondents indicated increased attention will be afforded to outdoor entertaining spaces.

So what might the outdoor spaces of homes built in the not-so-distant

future look like? Respondents to the survey anticipated a growing demand for various built-in outdoor features, including:

- Firepits or fireplaces
- Outdoor kitchens (even in Vermont?)
- Gazebos or pergolas
- Pools
- Spas or hot tubs

Though trends and consumer demands are ever-shifting, architects and designers are anticipating that future homeowners will want more developed outdoor living spaces and greater access to nature, which is something current homeowners can keep in mind when renovating their properties.

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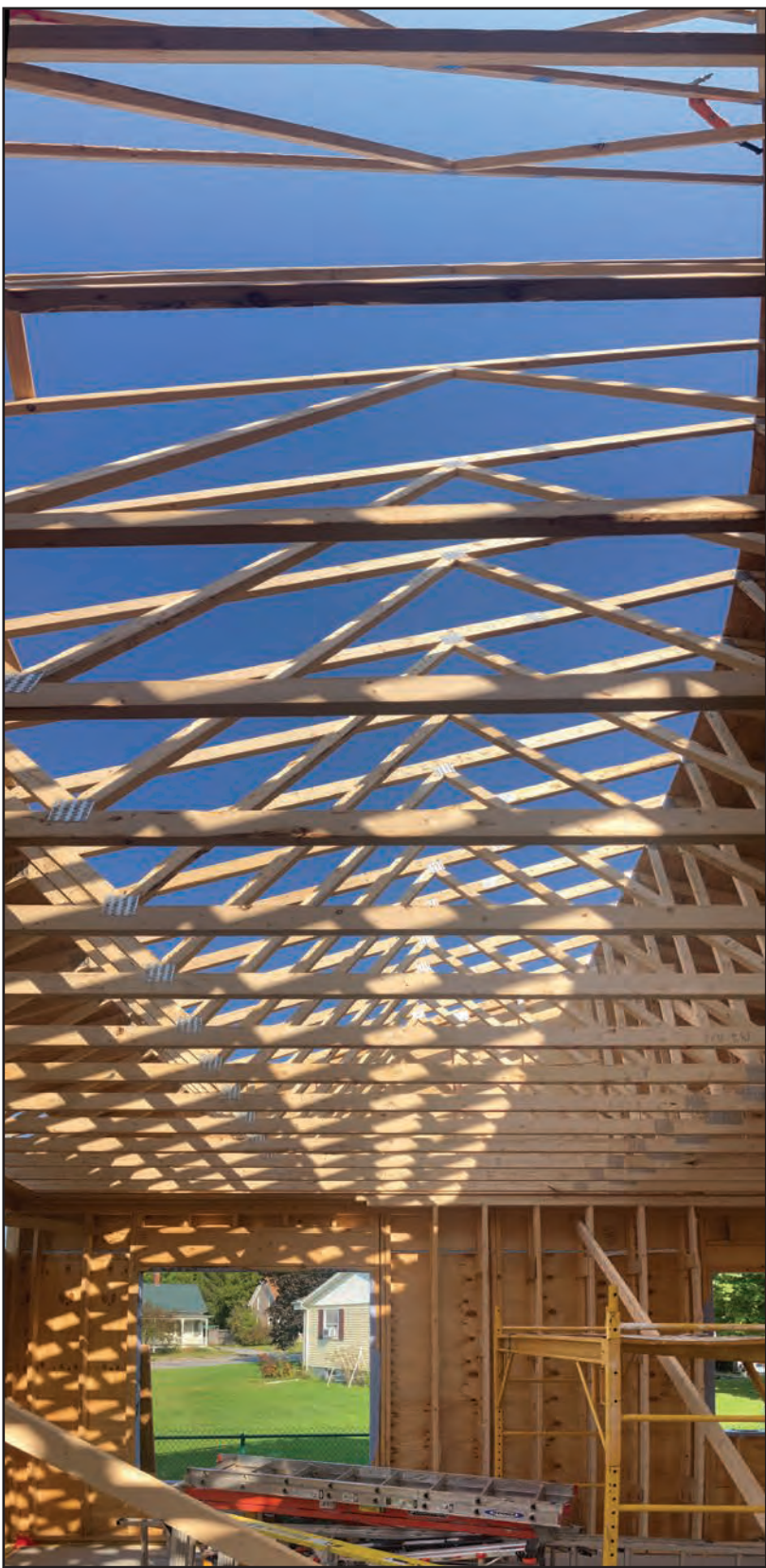
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It takes a village

THE FIRST OF four Habitat for Humanity houses is taking shape off Gorham Lane in Middlebury. These September photos show the roof going on with the help of many volunteers, as well as Naylor & Breen. When the first house is completed late this year or next, a foundation awaits a second home, which will be constructed next year.

Photos by Kathy Purcell and John S. McCright

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Metro Creative photo

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’s 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 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’re 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 aren’t 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.


— Metro Creative



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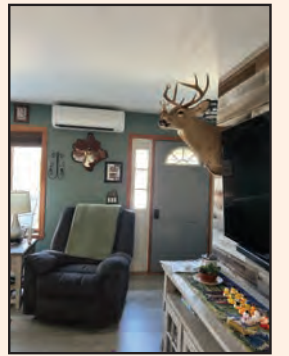
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Homeowners Recommendations



We received quotes from Bristol Electronics and another well-known Vermont solar company, and were pleasantly surprised that Bristol had the better price, and we preferred Bristol's microinverter approach. Additionally, we were very pleased to learn that the panels and racking system were made in the USA with some components manufactured by a Vermont company. On top of this, the folks at Bristol were such a pleasure to work with. We can't remember a more pleasant experience when making a major investment.

We had a variety of questions which they happily addressed. Their knowledgeable staff was well versed with applicable regulations and requirements, building codes and even wind loading concerns. They truly went out of their way to make sure we were educated on the system and pleased with the installation.

This was a very rewarding experience which began with a goal of wanting to make our home fully renewably powered by working with a local team and culminated with meeting great members of our community, keeping our dollars local while also supporting other American renewable technology manufacturers. We found kindred spirits at BE and we can't recommend them highly enough!

Megan Nedzinski and Joshua Faulkner – South Starksboro, VT

We had Bristol Electronics install three heat pump systems for us in November of 2023. One system covers our bedroom. The other two systems cover the front side of our home. We have saved money and we feel more comfortable. During our first winter, our heating bill went down by \$200 - \$300 per month while our electricity costs only went up by \$100 per month, saving us \$100 - \$200 per month.

During our first summer, we sold the three window air conditioners we had been using. We can see out the windows and won't have to put the a/c units in and out when the seasons change. The heat pumps have only needed to be on "low" to keep the temperatures comfortable. We notice we can hear each other better and we don't have to turn the television up to get over the loud air conditioners like we did before. These systems are so quiet.

The heat pumps have provided more consistent heating and cooling than our old heating and cooling equipment. We are saving money, are more comfortable, can hear each other and can see out of our windows.

Wayne & Diane Smith, Salisbury, VT



"Bristol Electronics makes it easy for you to go solar. From the detailed, patient explanations, to the rebates, estimates and permits, Bristol Electronics takes care of it all. I obtained several quotes from various companies but it was Bristol Electronics who ultimately won my business with their friendly, approachable attitude and superior knowledge of the technology. When I began this project I was uneducated and apprehensive. Now I find myself encouraging my friends and family to call Bristol Electronics for a free quote and explanation because I truly believe in their product and company. They are highly skilled and professional in every respect.

Stephen and his crew encouraged my children's curiosity and made learning fun for them. Little things like making handprints in the cement of our solar system sparked talks about reducing your carbon footprint and how everyone can help, even children. The whole experience could not have been easier or better. Seeing the power meter run backwards is just icing on the cake."

Heather Shepard – Bristol

