# HOME IMPROVEMENT

### **GUIDE**

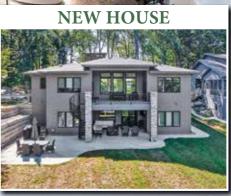
Learn how Lake Panorama residents transformed their homes and properties into beautiful living spaces.

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## PUBLISHER'S COLUMN

## Summer may be over, but the projects never are

By Shane Goodman | Publisher

As the seasons change, so do the home improvement projects. I hope you were able to cross a few off your list in recent months. Or maybe you enjoyed the summer at the lake without any projects, as you certainly deserved to. Either way, I am guessing you have a few projects that have been put on the back burner that you need to deal with now. I know I do.



I have been saving some work in my garage for the winter months. After all, who wants to install insulation in the summer? Then again, who wants to ever install insulation?

Prior to that, I hope to have a couple electric heaters installed in the garage. Once that is complete, I plan to put sheeting on the walls and have a toasty warm workshop for the winter — or at least a warm place to enjoy beverages with friends in between snow removal.

If you are like me, there are some projects you will take on yourself. Also, like me, you may have other projects you need to call in the professionals for. You may even simply want ideas for future projects. Regardless of your home improvement goals, you will find this guide to be helpful during these upcoming cold winter months.

Thanks for reading. ■



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# Growing family calls for changes

Renovations make home more suitable for Strehle family.

Seven years ago, Josh and Valerie Strehle moved their family from the Des Moines area to Lake Panorama full-time. They knew they wanted to make the house their own back then, but they were new parents and busy with a young child. Fast forward to this past year. They had three young kids who each needed their own designated spaces. The time had come to remodel.

The first project they tackled was their ensuite bathroom. Then they made some quick updates — painting the trim and changing carpets. Next, they built their covered deck, which doubled the original deck's footprint.

"It was my husband's vision, and it was easily the best idea Josh had for our home," said Valerie. Three seasons out of the year, the Strehles are on that deck enjoying the view and each other, sometimes even having a dance party.



Josh and Valerie Strehle and their children have more space after their home remodel.





Josh and Valerie Strehle installed different flooring and reconfigured the kitchen to accommodate a larger island, changes which brought a more open and expansive feel to the kitchen and living areas. New kitchen cabinets reach the ceiling for more storage space and cleaner lines.



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After five years of living in the house and making only minor upgrades, they decided to change it all — with new, more lake-friendly flooring, paint and finishes. They ripped everything out, took the house down to the studs, added square footage and remodeled. They added LVP floors, a mud room, a downstairs gym, a Murphy bed in their home office and a faux beam in the living room. They then remodeled the bar, first-floor bathroom, kitchen, laundry room and primary closet. They even upgraded their entryway to double doors and moved it to the garage.

This massive undertaking meant they had to move out of the home for six weeks and, throughout the remainder of the renovation, live in the basement with limited amenities. It was sometimes challenging to use mini-fridges, small appliances and the bar sink, but

Since Valerie Strehle's home office doubles as a guest room, switching to a Murphy bed was a good solution to making the room work for both purposes.







they were happy to have their new main floor upgrades when they moved back in. Valerie was most excited about her home office.

"I worked from home and did not want our guest bed in the back of my daily video calls, so we added a hidden Murphy bed in the middle of the room and custom storage on each side," she said.

For all their upgrades, they leaned toward "modern minimalist" because Valerie said they "like the updated, modern features but hate clutter, so storage and simplicity were part of the design."

They hang out at their new bar when not on the deck.

"The lounge area is our favorite place to relax," she said. "The comfy leather chairs make you feel like you are in a fancy hotel bar and not in your own house."

For their remodel, they hired Kevin Laughery of Laughery Construction. Emily Lee at Emily Lee Interior Design led the vision for the design of the new spaces.



One of the earlier projects completed by Josh and Valerie Strehle was to double the size of their deck and have it covered to extend their living space and make it more versatile.

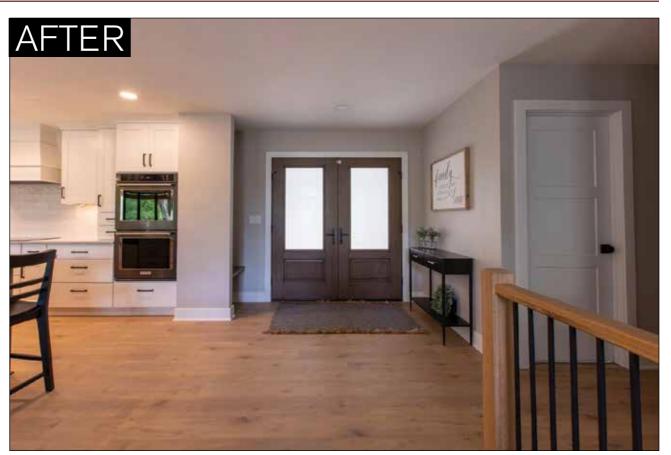


The cozy bar area with its leather chairs is a welcoming spot to sit and relax.

"We love our house," said Valerie. "We couldn't have done it without our amazing partners. They helped us walk through different options and helped us prioritize our wants and needs." From there, they went on shopping trips with Emily to pick out finishes. Valerie said the process was painless: "Emily and Kevin were great to work with from vision to execution."

From here on out, Valerie and Josh agreed that the inside is complete, and now they will focus on the curb and "water appeal" by painting the exterior. They advised living in the home for a while to see how you need to use it before you renovate, as they did. ■





The entry was transformed from a single door to a double door in a new location.

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## From outdated to trendy

Wards transform bathroom into a modern oasis.

When they moved into their Lake Panorama home in 2019, Angie Ward and her family knew they wanted to update the main spaces — the kitchen and all the bathrooms — to make it their dream lake home. The former homeowners maintained the home's overall structure well, but nothing had been cosmetically updated since it was built in the 1970s.

Angie and her family wasted no time in making the home their own. They began with the kitchen, adding new countertops and backsplash, removing some cupboards, and painting all the cabinets. They then ripped up the old carpet and linoleum and installed luxury vinyl. They repainted the entire interior of the home.

Then it was time for the bathrooms — the final project before the updates were complete.

Angie describes her family as handy, so they tackled the painting, tiling and flooring with the help of many friends and family. For the bathrooms of their dreams, however, they knew they needed professionals. They chose NexGen Baths because the company is local, and they had heard great things about their work. They began with a tiny, dark bathroom. Wyatt from NextGen shared his vision of how to borrow a little space from the utility room to allow for a roomy walk-in shower. Angie was shocked by how quickly it was finished.

"In a few days, the NexGen team came in and gutted it



The new look of the basement bathroom features shiplap, new vinyl flooring, an Onyx shower and a vanity countertop, all with a modern lake house feel.

and built us a completely new, beautiful bathroom," says Angie. "We tend to gravitate toward modern materials and updates, but we also like to mix in vintage, repurposed and warm, inviting materials."

They worked to make their home cozy, easy to maintain and welcoming to guests. They chose finishes that reflect their vision of "a mix between a cottage and a year-round home." The first bathroom, when redone, had shiplap, new vinyl flooring, an Onyx shower, and a vanity countertop — all perfect for lake living.



#### **BATHROOM**





After that, the second bathroom off the primary bedroom was remodeled. They made similar changes to expand the room and finish it with the same touches such as an Onyx shower, which Angie says is easy to clean and made to last.

"We would never have been able to see this vision working, but the NexGen team, with their experience, were able to help us make this dream come true.

It's now a room we are proud to share with our guests.

"Our favorite part is we have made big changes to the house without having to go extreme," she continues. "It is the comfortable, functional lake home we always wanted."

To have the same easy experience, she recommends that people compile their wishlist and reach out to professionals who "have creative solutions and visions that can help make your wishes come true."

Angie also recommends researching and going with a contractor who specializes in what you're looking for.

"NexGen was perfect for our timeline because we were looking for a quick turnaround and wanted to spend more time enjoying the lake and relaxing, not spending months in the middle of renovation projects."







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## An unobstructed view of the lake

The Masons reconfigured their living, dining and kitchen areas to maximize the view.

Josh and Niki Mason have lived in their Lake Panorama House for just over a year, but they have made tremendous changes quickly. Previously, they coowned the next-door home with another family. The two families' children

had been young when they bought that house five years ago. But, as the children grew, the Masons found they needed more room. When their current home became available on the market, they decided it was time for a move. They said they were grateful to still be close to their neighbors so they can continue to spend time at the lake together.





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#### KITCHEN + LIVING ROOM



"It's wonderful because our families can still grow up at the lake with each other, but we have our own space now," Niki said.

They delayed moving into their new home, as much of it was gutted for the renovation. The Masons have four girls ages 6 to 13, so they needed several bathrooms and spaces for their family to enjoy lake living.

They started from scratch on the bathrooms and kitchen. They opened the kitchen up because it was blocked off, as was the small living room. There wasn't the lake view they were dreaming of because a large drywalled column housed the furnace pipes and the pantry. They relocated these to create an open and brighter space. They installed new flooring and painted the entire interior of the home, including the walls and trim. They introduced a "drop zone" built by the door and a basement bar. On the exterior, they added a large new deck outfitted with a new set of stairs to the upper deck to connect the two stellar outdoor spaces.

The Masons oversaw the work, hiring contractors Lake Panorama residents recommended. Their vision was born from a community brainstorming process. The Masons called on others with a similar style — what Nikki refers to as "lakey." They invited friends, family members and contractors through the space

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The entryway into the kitchen is more convenient now with a "drop zone" installed. The new semi-circular island provides more seating, and the new floor in the open space ties it all together.





#### KITCHEN + LIVING ROOM

and listened to their ideas. The plans came together as the ideas they gathered during these think tanks and their wish and must-have lists came together.

The overall result of the renovations is a place they love. Niki shared that the "most dramatic change was removing the sitting room and large column." This had a considerable impact, opening the main floor space with an open-concept kitchen, dining room and living room areas flanked by the view of the lake they were craving and the drop zone they needed for their kids. They also introduced a large,



Josh and Niki Mason moved to their lake home as their four daughters grew to need more space of their own.

circular kitchen island with barstools for six, so they can all comfortably sit around it. And when they have guests, they can sit at their large table adjacent. Then everyone can spread out on the two decks and enjoy the lake view together.



The open space after the remodel allows for a view of the lake from the kitchen, through the dining room and living room.

Next up, the Masons plan to update the house's exterior with paint, landscaping and a new dock. The inside is exactly what they want it to be. Niki's advice is that "homeowners should plan for the unexpected if they have plans to renovate. If you have a budget, plan to go over it due to unexpected costs you might incur."



## Landscaping project leads to overhaul of house

Lake is focal point for Tolstons' home.

When Ken and Jan Tolston purchased their home from a longtime neighbor, they decided they needed to renovate it to accommodate their lifestyle. What began as a landscaping project eventually turned into a complete overhaul.

The Tolstons also own the house next door, and Jan shared that both properties needed a total landscape redo. They chose Dean Stanley from Green Acres Lawn and Landscaping



Ken and Jan Tolston's lake house underwent a striking transformation inside and outside.

in Atlantic for the project. Jan said she and Ken would travel around the lake to gather landscaping ideas and inspiration. They found one home that spoke to them. They were







particularly drawn to the stonework. Despite their research, they could not find that specific stone. So, Jan knocked on the owners' door, and they told her it was Rosetta Stone.

"Finding that stone was the foundation of our landscaping design," she said.

Jan's vision also included a structural change to the entire house. She shared her vision with the designers and architects, and they saw her dream, too. Accord Architecture drew up the blueprints. From there, friends at the lake and Accord recommended Billy Donovan of Donovan Construction.

"Billy and Travis ended up being the perfect fit for our project," Jan said, adding that the subcontractors were as well. "Berger Electric, Doug's Plumbing and everyone involved in our project was amazing to work with. They were all communicative and intuitive and always promised only what they could deliver."

The Tolstons researched Tesla roofs after a family member mentioned it as an option. They liked the idea of a solar roof to power their home with an integrated solar and energy storage system. Coincidentally, there was only one other house in Iowa with a similar roof, and it was also on Lake Panorama.







The Tolstons wanted to use solar power and chose a Tesla roof that could provide it while also having a sleek finished look.



The bathroom reflects the bright, clean modern look seen throughout the rest of the Tolston home.



The modern kitchen area overlooks the living area and lake so the view and company can be enjoyed from there.

"We were able to see exactly what the roof looked like, and it made sense," she said. "It was a frustrating endeavor for Billy, but, in the end, we are pleased with our decision."

For design inspiration, Jan and Ken wanted the lake view to be the house's focal point. So, the placement and finishes of the windows, lighting and art installed were all critical components of their remodel. Jan's friend Julie Lyle at Indie House (East Village in Des Moines) was instrumental in their choice of lighting, furniture, rugs, etc.

"She understood what I wanted and presented the perfect options for me to choose from," Jan said.

When all was said and done, Jan and Ken were thrilled with the results.

"What we envisioned became the home we now call our oasis. We have a wonderful community at Lake Panorama. We have enjoyed being able to spend the last half of the summer here," Jan said.



The focal point of the home is the lake view, which is better taken advantage of with a wall of windows.

The Tolstons only have a few minor landscaping projects now and do not foresee any more renovations coming from those. They are still trying to grow grass and will plant more this fall. Eventually, they would like to put an outdoor kitchen on the neighboring property. But, for now, they are happy.

"We are looking forward to enjoying our home on the lake with no projects to do," Jan said. ■



## From shack to showstopper

After 20 years, Petersons build home on their lake property.

When Chris and Kristy Peterson bought their lot on Lake Panorama 21 years ago, there was nothing there. They soon built a 10-foot by 12-foot storage shed, with no running water or electricity. For two decades, they spent most of their free days out on the lake and, in the evenings, drove home to West Des Moines. Now, more than two decades later, thanks to the work of JRL Builders, they finally have their lake home.

For 20 years, they planned for their dream home.

"We always enjoyed time on the boat cruising around the lake and looking at homes and talking about what we would like if we were ever going to build," Chris said.



For 20 years, Chris and Kristy Peterson enjoyed their lake property during the day then returned to their suburban home. Finally they took the leap, tore down the shack that had occupied the property and built their dream home.















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The Petersons' kitchen is light and airy and features a walk-in pantry for plenty of storage space.

When a new home was built along one of the lake's coves, the Petersons liked its overall look and finish so much they took a few photos. This was the beginning of their research for their future build.

The project plan and design evolved over the years each time they went out on the boat. They still enjoyed time with their friends and family at their happy place on the lake, despite no utilities or house.

"The most important part was the time spent with loved ones," Chris said. And, as they visited those loved ones at their homes on other lakes throughout the Midwest, they would pick up more ideas for their wishlist.

After their youngest daughter graduated college and the pandemic began in 2020, the Petersons decided not to wait any longer to enjoy their lake lot fully.

"We decided that it was clear that we never know what turns the road has in store for us, and we should take advantage of the present," Chris said.

When Lake Panorama Times published a home renovation insert, they saw the home they had taken pictures of in the JRL Builders' ad. They contacted the business and discussed their vision with Luke from JRL at their lot.

"Luke was highly organized and responsive," Chris said. "Building homes at the lake can present some unique challenges, but we were impressed with their communication and follow-through. They went above and beyond what we expected. The process was very easy for us."

When they built their home, they made it a one-story home so that they could enjoy it in the future along with their daughters' growing families.



Lake living and hosting family and friends went into every aspect of their build — from luxury vinyl planks to excess living, laundry and bathroom spaces. They incorporated dual laundry rooms, a lake entry room (they lovingly refer to it as the "shed"), bunk rooms, and ample bathrooms to accommodate a lot of guests. They added a guest living space under the detached garage with a convertible living area and kitchenette. The style they leaned toward was coastal, and, for inspiration, they looked to sea glass and chambray.

"I have no style and do whatever my wife, Kristy, thinks looks best," said Chris. "JRL and their team were a perfect sounding board for our design of the interior and exterior, using our example pictures to work with the vendors to narrow the selections to a manageable, targeted list.

"Kristy and I would discuss at great length, but her final and usually deciding question to Luke would always be,

'If this were your house, what would you do?' " After a few months of working together, Luke would call and tell Chris, "Tell Kristy this is what I would do on my house."

The Petersons don't have immediate plans to do any further major renovations but may add a pontoon to host more friends and family out on the water now that they have room for more to stay. After renovating their home in West Des Moines a few years ago and building their lake home, their advice is, "Enjoy the work and saving that you have done by investing in the things that you and your family will have the chance to enjoy."

The Petersons say they are happy they did so. They say they often look out from the dock and see the same view they had for 20 years, but turning and walking up to their dream home where once there was just a shack still feels surreal.

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