

home & garden

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The ABCs of ADUs

Los Altans describe their path to building backyard homes

Also inside:

- Creating an outdoor oasis
- Celebrating native plants
- Picking the perfect carpet

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Accessory Dwelling Units

Local homeowners tell their stories of installing backyard ADUs in Los Altos.

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Outdoor Living

Spring is the ideal time to think about creating a cozy and relaxing space for outdoor entertaining.

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Garden Blooms

California poppies are one of many native plants that bloom in myriad vivid orange hues.

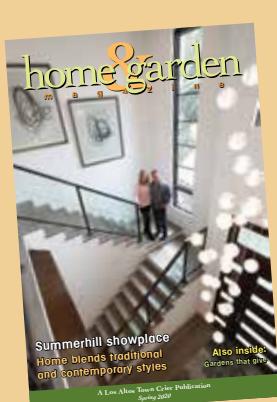
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Home Decor

When it comes to choosing wall-to-wall carpet, the options are seemingly endless – here's an explainer.

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Have a story idea for one of our magazines?

Email editor Bruce Barton at bruceb@latc.com.

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Cover photo: Laurie and Larry Moore have a glass of wine in the accessory dwelling unit they built.

PHOTO BY ERIC DAVIDOVE/SPECIAL TO THE TOWN CRIER

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The ABCs of ADUs

Homeowners share tales of downsized but luxurious living spaces



ZOE MORGAN/TOWN CRIER

Lynne and Tim Farrell decided to install an accessory dwelling unit in their Los Altos backyard, above. The home was built offsite and then lowered into their yard via crane.

By Carolyn Snyder

Special to the Town Crier

With apologies to Charles Dickens

this is “A Tale of Two ADUs” – accessory dwelling units – one built from the ground up, the other dropped from the sky.

Both are in Los Altos, where it has become easier to build ADUs thanks to statewide legislation effective January 2020. These days only a building permit and related permits are required, with no discretionary approval with public notice.

One was installed recently by the homeowners as a residence for their daughter and son-in-law. The other was for the homeowners themselves, allowing their daughter, son-in-law and granddaughter to occupy the main house.

In the latter case, the project began in the spring of 2018 (prior to the new ADU rulings) and took the bet-

ter part of a year to secure permits – much longer than it took to build the ADU. The other project took just a few months.

Here are their stories.

Customized comfort

Four years ago, Laurie and Larry Moore were newly retired, just after closing their business of 45 years, Larry’s Auto Works in Mountain View. They loved their home of nearly four decades but decided it was too big. She was tired of dusting rooms they weren’t using, and he realized that he had developed a high-maintenance property.

They decided to build themselves an ADU so their daughter and her family, who were living in Richmond, could move into what Laurie calls the “big house.” They were concerned about their granddaughter’s edu-

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cation and wanted her to have the benefit of Los Altos schools.

"We've always loved the property and felt there was no reason to move," Laurie said. "Our idea was to build a home where we could spend the rest of our lives."

There was another plus to their decision, what Larry jokingly calls their "live-in workforce."

The Moores worked with Jeanette Loretz of JL Designs & Interiors, whom they met through the Peninsula Executives Association, a networking group. The builder was Jeanette's husband, Rick, of Loretz Construction.

They began the project in 2018 but, because of the



ERIC DAVIDOVE/SPECIAL TO THE TOWN CRIER

Laurie and Larry Moore built an ADU on their property to live in, enabling their daughter and her family to move into the main house.

variance requirement and other issues, were unable to break ground until July 2019. But the wait was worth it.

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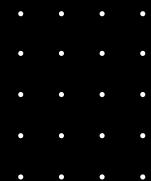
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Laurie Moore's ADU features a large fish tank and a big-screen TV that captures images of the koi pond in front of the main house.



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“They wanted a floor plan that would meet their needs and maintain their lifestyle,” Jeanette said. “Because they love to cook, particularly Larry, the kitchen has a full-size refrigerator, not often found in ADUs.”

The kitchen also incorporates an island – a butcher-block table from the main house – and a greenhouse window. Pendants with high lumen output hang above the island.

“A lot of thought and planning went into the project,” Laurie said. “The bedroom is extra big because it is also our workout room. We added an extra foot for my Pilates.”

The bath was designed for aging in place. The shower is curb-less, the walls have been blocked for safety bars and there is more than adequate lighting. The entrance is wide enough to accommodate a wheelchair.

The living area in the 864-square-foot unit was designed to accommodate a large fish tank and a big-screen TV that has a special purpose – a way to enjoy the koi pond in front of the main house.

“We enjoyed watching the fish and hearing the sound of the two waterfalls, so we installed a koi-cam,” Larry said. “We can watch it on the big screen and even our phones.”

Among other features are custom glass pocket



ZOE MORGAN/TOWN CRIER

Scores of neighbors awaited the arrival of the Farrells' ADU, which arrived by truck, above, and was subsequently loaded onto a crane for transport to their backyard.

doors, a vaulted ceiling and a laundry area.

"It feels big inside," Larry added. "And the kitchen functions better than the one in the big house."

Pre-fab(ulous)

Four years ago, Lynne and Tim Farrell's daughter and son-in-law broached the idea of moving to the back of their property.

"It was their idea," Lynne said. "And it made sense. Our daughter is a registered nurse and our son-in-law was thinking of retiring."

Lynne's nephew, an architect in Santa Rosa, began drafting plans for the project, but along came the Tubbs Fire and he was inundated with work. After a months-long negative experience with a San Jose firm, the couple contacted Abodu, a Redwood City startup that specializes in customizable factory-built homes delivered in as little as three months. It offers three housing models: studio, one-bedroom and two-bedroom, with prices starting at \$189,000.

"Abodu units are built to be lived in," said John Geary, co-founder of Abodu with Eric McInerney. "You'll be hard-pressed to find a small-footprint structure that is more inviting. Ample natural light, cathedral ceilings and a full-service kitchen are hallmarks of our products."

Geary grew up in Cupertino and attended elementary school in Los Altos. He was onsite when the Far-

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ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS



PHOTOS BY ERIC DAVIDOVE/SPECIAL TO THE TOWN CRIER

The Moores' 864-square-foot ADU includes space for exercise, top, and a curb-less shower, above.

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rells' one-bedroom, 500-square-foot unit was deposited behind their two-story home.

"You can see it flying from 280," Geary said at the time, watching as a giant crane lifted it off a flatbed truck.

Prior to this spectacular event, which was observed by scores of neighbors, its protective wrapping was removed.

"Take the wrapping off and it's Christmas all over again," he said.

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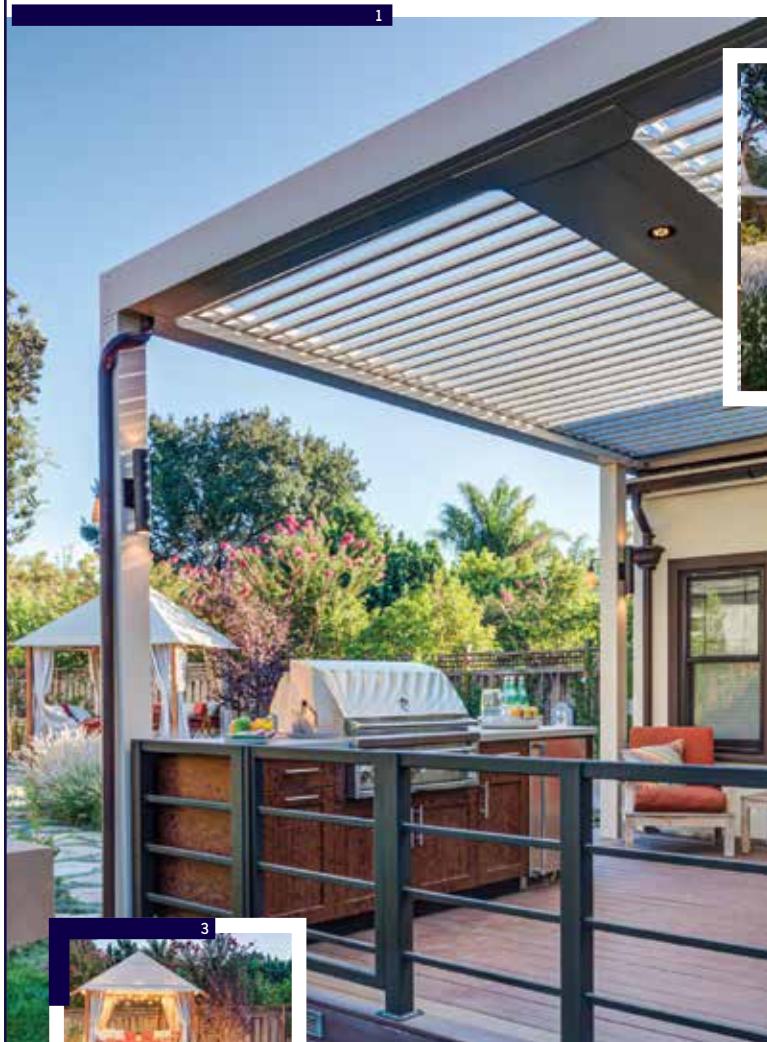
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Harrell Remodeling transformed this awkward backyard into an award-winning recreational retreat.

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3



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²**Repurposed spaces**—Swimming pool, spa, and open grassy area offer exercise options.

³**Ways to unwind**—The pool cabana, dining area, and seating walls offer many options for relaxation.

"Our backyard offered us space for enjoyment & tranquility this year. We are so happy with how it turned out!"

—Homeowner

For a continued look at this transformation visit Harrell-Remodeling.com/Outdoor-Oasis

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ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS



PHOTOS BY ZOE MORGAN/TOWN CRIER

The Farrells' ADU dropped from the sky, top, and received careful placement in their backyard, above.

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The unit features a 10-foot-by-14-foot bedroom, a living/dining room, a galley kitchen with full-size appliances, a combination washer and dryer, and a La Cantina accordion-style glass door.

Abodu works with an onsite contractor for permitting and site preparation while the unit is being factory-built, then delivers and installs it.

"Workers drove from the factory in Utah to put finishing touches on the unit after it was placed onsite," Lynne said.

It's one-stop shopping, so to speak. According to Geary, Abodu does it all from start to finish.

"While each project varies by site, homeowners will complete their project at a cost equal to roughly 50-60% of a comparable site-built structure," he said.

Another plus he cited is the minimal time contractors are onsite, thus preserving the sanity of the homeowners and the ambience of the neighborhood.

For more information on the Loretzes' businesses, visit jldesignsandinteriors.com or loetzconstruction.com.

For more information on Abodu, visit abodu.com.

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LAUREN EDITH ANDERSEN/SPECIAL TO THE TOWN CRIER

An outdoor space can be transformed into a peaceful oasis, ideal for relaxing with family and friends.

By Celeste Randolph

With the weather warming up, you don't need to go far from home to create your own outdoor oasis.

Spring is the perfect time to ready your porch or a backyard nook for long and lazy days outside.

By DESIGN

On a recent Friday, a client insisted I stay for a glass of wine in the late afternoon. After a long and stressful week, it was exactly what I needed. Her backyard was the ideal place to linger as the sun set. She had comfortable seating in a shady setting, with an antique millstone fountain glistening in the sun.

I loved the clean and fresh feel of being in her lush garden.

Even a small outdoor space is full of opportunities for creativity and expression. A comfortable chair, pillow, plants and a sculpture immediately make a backyard corner or front porch feel like an escape.

As always, remember that updating your space doesn't need to be expensive or time consuming. Begin with what you have, and edit out anything that doesn't feel necessary or inspiring. Ask yourself what sort of space you want: a welcoming front porch, a reading nook, a romantic spot for a glass of wine, a small backyard for intimate gatherings with friends. Design your space based on your personality and the

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PHOTOS BY LAUREN EDITH ANDERSEN/SPECIAL TO THE TOWN CRIER

A corner of the backyard or a porch can be renovated into a welcoming space with comfortable chairs, pillows and decorative plants.

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space's intended function.

Start fresh with a spring clean. I love being in my backyard or on my porch after cleaning the windows, dusting the cobwebs off the exterior of the house and sweeping the patio and paths. This will create mental and physical space for you to dream about what your

outdoor oasis could be.

A variety of succulents in minimal concrete pots is modern and brightens a porch year-round. Soft grasses and ferns in ceramic pots add interest and texture. Add a wreath composed of dried natural grasses or eucalyptus for lovely muted green tones. Outdoor rugs come in a variety of colors and patterns; we love black and white patterns for something bold, or soft

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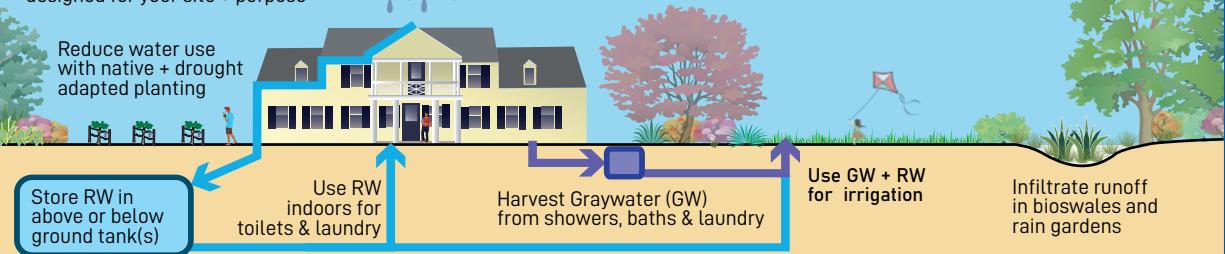
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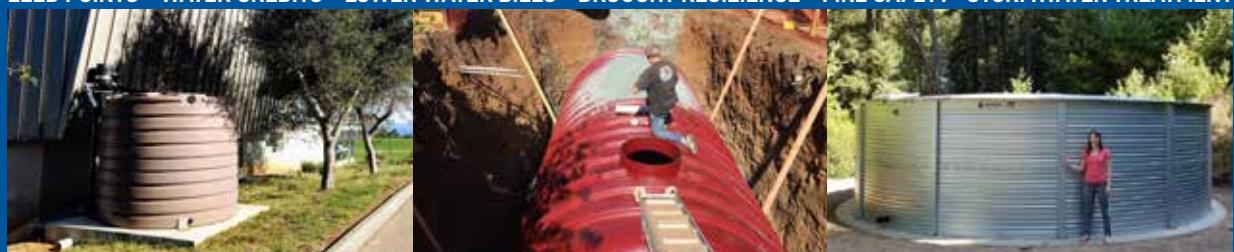
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neutrals like grays and tans for a subtler look. Simple string lights with round bulbs and brass accents are elegant in the daytime and create a cozy nook in the evenings.

Create intimate seating with a few natural rattan lounge chairs. Pillows or cushions with all-weather covers are a must for spring, rain or shine. Bring out a woven basket full of soft throw blankets on cooler nights. For guests, consider a patio sectional set with cube concrete accent tables on the side or an ottoman and floor pillows in the middle. A midcentury-style rocking chair or Adirondack chair doesn't have to be outdated; adding a fresh coat of paint or updating outdoor upholstery can breathe new life into your favorite sunny reading spot.

Celeste Randolph is an interior designer in Los Altos.

For more information, visit

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LAUREN EDITH ANDERSEN/SPECIAL TO THE TOWN CRIER

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The color orange

Flowers offer punctuations of joy



TANYA KUCAK/SPECIAL TO THE TOWN CRIER

California poppies are plentiful in the early spring, with their vivid orange hue brightening the landscape. The flowers open on sunny days and stay closed when it's cloudy.

By Tanya Kucak

Orange is a joyous

and optimistic color. In my garden, the first big spring flowers are California poppies, and the last dramatic swathes of color in the autumn before frost are red-orange California fuchsia shrubs. In between, all shades of orange punctuate native gardens.

The iconic orange flower of California is also the official state flower: the California poppy. It has a long bloom period, often starting around the beginning of spring. The flowers open on sunny days and stay closed when it's cloudy. Once you have one plant in your garden, you will ever after have a field of

NATIVE PLANTS

poppies – if you want them – because like most annuals, it sets a prodigious amount of seed. It's a great plant to fill in between other plants when you are planting a new area. It's easy to "edit

out" the ones you don't want. Because these poppies have a long taproot, you can cut the plants back to an inch or two after each flush of bloom, give them some water, and they will continue blooming for several more months.

Another annual in the poppy family, wind poppy, has a more delicate look. Its petals are crinkly rather than satin-smooth, and a more saturated shade of

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orange. The flowers float higher above the foliage on slender stems, rather than being nestled in feathery leaves. The deep purple throat makes the stamens stand out. Like many wildflowers, it blooms in April and May.

An even more delicate-looking flower is the apricot globemallow. It's a desert plant that forms an upright clump 2- to 4-feet high and wide. It's drought-tolerant and likes the hottest spot in the garden, but with a little summer water, it can bloom for months. Colors range from soft peach to deep orange-red. If you buy a plant in bloom, you will know exactly what color you are getting. After flowering, cut stems back to 6 inches.

Summer shrubs

For a bigger splash of orange through the summer, several showy native shrubs bloom in shades of orange from pale apricot to deep orange-red.

The flowers of dwarf flannelbush look as if they've been carved from wax. Typically, orange-red buds open to yellow-orange flowers that bloom April to July. This shrub is the most garden-tolerant of the fremontodendrons, which are drought-tolerant but must have excellent drainage and no summer water.



TANYA KUCAK/SPECIAL TO THE TOWN CRIER

Hybrid monkeyflowers such as Jelly Bean Orange, above, have more predictable colors and a more compact form than the straight species.



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PHOTOS BY TANYA KUCAK/SPECIAL TO THE TOWN CRIER

Wind poppies, left, boast intricate details that can be seen up close. Dwarf flannelbush, right, is aptly named for the prominent hairs on the stems, flowers and leaves.

It's a great plant to admire at a distance. You won't want it next to a path where you might brush against it, because it has irritating hairs. Likewise, plant it where it can spread out 4 feet high and wide, so you won't have to prune it.

You can find floriferous orange monkeyflowers – sticky, bush, azalea-flowered and hybrids – in a range of tones from pale apricot to rich pumpkin. The 2- to 4-foot sticky monkeyflower subshrubs that populate dry hillsides all summer have soft orange flowers. Hybrid perennial varieties such as Pumpkin or Jelly Bean Orange can have more saturated colors and larger flowers, and do better in part shade.

Finally, hummingbird fuchsia is so named because its profuse tubular flowers are a hummingbird magnet. The most prevalent color is a vibrant red-orange – or orange-red – that contrasts beautifully with the typically silver to blue-gray foliage. Select Mattole is a low groundcover, Calistoga is 18 inches high and Catalina is over 2 feet. Named varieties, like these, are often easier to control in the garden than the straight species, which spreads widely. Blooms begin in late summer and continue until the first frost. For a more compact plant, cut back to an inch or two anytime before new growth appears in the spring. In a small garden, dig around the plant to corral any runners.

Tanya Kucak gardens organically. Email her at tanya.garden@gmail.com.

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Floor plan

Tips for selecting the perfect carpet

By Sherry Scott

Q: We are considering which flooring to install in a room addition to our home. Hardwood flooring seems to be straightforward; however, the choices for carpet types are more daunting. Would you break down the differences in types of carpet?

A: It might help to know there are two important components to wall-to-wall carpet, which is also called broadloom carpet: the materials and the construction type. Broadloom carpet consists of fiber and backing. The other component is how the carpet is constructed, which affects both the appearance and

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COURTESY OF PATCRAFT

Carpet comes in many varieties, with a range of materials and construction types.

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the wearability and longevity of the carpet.

A little-known secret by most people looking for residential carpet is how it is sold. Stores and websites selling to residential customers typically sell carpet by referring to how “plush” it is, which is a marketing term. Extra plush, velvet plush, soft plush and luxurious plush are a few of the descriptions that sound appealing but don’t say anything about the actual fiber used or the construction type.

Googling “plush carpet” returns 133 million results. That should be confirmation enough that the term has essentially no agreed-upon definition.

In the world of commercial carpet, also known as contract carpet, it is sold by the specification of the carpet fiber type, amount of fiber and construction



COURTESY OF STANTON CARPET

Carpet can be color-coordinated with the furniture and accents in a room.

method. The majority of carpet fibers used in carpet today are either man-made of nylon or polypropylene, or wool. Fast fact: Nylon was created to mimic the look and feel of wool at a lower price in 1939. It was

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the world's first totally synthetic textile fiber. Today, high-quality nylons can cost nearly as much as wool. Polypropylene is a low-cost, water-resistant fiber used both indoors and outdoors. Wool fiber is from sheep, and depending on where the sheep graze in the world, they have varying amounts of lanolin coating each strand of wool. Lanolin keeps dirt from penetrating the wool and wicks moisture from the fibers, so spills are easy to clean up. It is the superior fiber to use.

Carpet construction

The construction of the carpet is essentially a loop pulled through the backing. Variations include cutting the top of each loop for a cut-pile type, or only cutting some for a cut-and-loop combination. Loop-pile carpet, either full or partial, typically will wear better than the all-cut-pile type. The style or look of the carpet will change with the construction type.

More fiber on the face of the carpet (also known as faceweight) and a denser (tighter) weave are what is specified for heavy-duty commercial carpets. These more robust carpet weaves cost more, commensurate with the content. Wool is the gold standard and is the softest in feel and look; however, some advanced

nylons come close to the properties of wool.

While knowing about construction and content should be helpful when comparing residential carpets, they are only labeled with content. The only way to get both metrics is to seek out commercial-grade carpet.

The alternative for comparing residential carpet is to make a visual comparison. If it is hard to push a finger through the carpet to the backing, it should be dense enough for wearability. This holds true for loop-pile or cut-pile carpet, or a combination of both. For a cut-pile test to estimate if it will crush down easily, as on stairs, try pushing it down to make it lay flat. If that is easy to do, it is not packed tight enough to allow each pile to hold the other piles up. Once a carpet sales associate knows you are looking for a more specific quality of carpet, he or she should have the expertise to show you carpets that are more than "plush."

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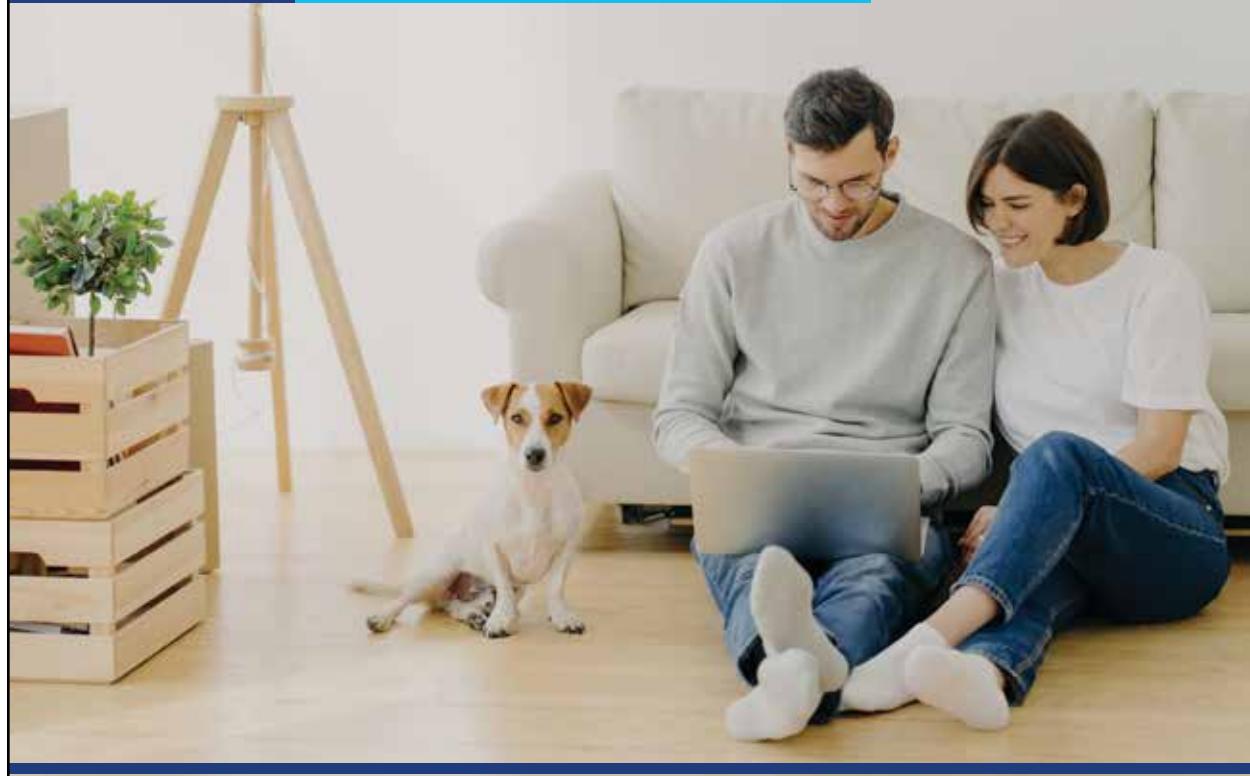
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