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Modern pellet stoves have a pleasing aesthetic while providing an efficient and affordable way to heat a room.

## Is wood pellet heating right for your home?

StatePoint

Wood pellet heating is growing in popularity as more people discover its cost-saving, environmental and efficiency benefits. To understand exactly what wood pellet heating is and whether it's the right fit for your home, consider these answers to commonly asked questions.

**• What is wood pellet heating?** Wood pellet heating is a method of warming homes and buildings using small, compressed wood pellets as fuel. Compared to other heating methods, it's an affordable, efficient, and environmentally friendly option.

**• How energy efficient is pellet heating?** Due to the low-moisture content of wood pellets and the advanced combustion systems of modern wood pellet stoves, pellet heating can help lower bills and improve energy efficiency. In fact, it's possible to convert almost 100% of the pellets to heat energy with very little waste.

**• How does the cost of wood pellet heating compare to other heating types?** Installing pellet heating stoves is generally more affordable than other heating fuel sources. You'll also likely spend less or the same on fuel costs and may become eligible for tax credits. And because fossil fuels and other energy sources are more subject to market price swings, heating with wood pellets can help you predict your winter budget more accurately.

**• Is pellet heating good for the planet?** In addition to being energy efficient, wood pellet heating is also a solid choice for eco-conscious households because the pellets are a renewable resource made primarily from recycled or upcycled materials that may otherwise end up in a landfill.

**• Is pellet heating convenient?** Ready-to-use wood pellets are found in most gardening and home improvement retailers. You can also arrange for home delivery. Wood pellets can be used in many types of appliances, including

► See **Stove**, Page C4



STATEPOINT  
Pellet stoves come in many different styles with different venting options.



PHOTO PROVIDED BY KINSTRUCT TINY HOMES  
A look inside the kitchen and living space of "The Ossipee," a one-bedroom model offered by Kinstruct Tiny Homes. The Kinstruct website lists three base models for the Ossipee, with square footage of 504, 576 or 660. **Inset photo:** An illustration of the exterior of an Ossipee model.

# ADUs bring families together

■ Accessory dwellings provide efficient, convenient space for extended family on your existing property.

By Darrell Halen  
Special to the Union Leader

WHEN ONE OF Jo-Ann Beauregard's sons and his wife suggested that she and her husband, both retirees, come to live on their Manchester property, perhaps in an attachment to the house, she was intrigued by the idea.

She did some research and found a company that builds accessory dwelling units, known as ADUs, and tiny homes.

An ADU is a secondary housing unit located on the same property as a primary residence. They are often referred



DARRELL HALEN

Kinstruct Tiny Homes owners Jessica and Mark Stevenson visit the Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) they're constructing for Mark's mother at their Windham home.

to as "in-law apartments." Putting an ADU on the Manchester property allowed the Beauregards, who split each year between living in Florida and living in New Hampshire, to downsize from their Nashua condo — which they weren't using for six months every year — and to be closer to their family, including their other son who lives in Hooksett.

The couple hired Kinstruct Tiny Homes to build a one-

bedroom, one-bathroom, 609-square-foot ADU for them. They began the process in June 2024 and moved in on Dec. 12. "We loved the whole process of it," said Beauregard, who described the detached structure, which includes a small laundry room and kitchen, as small but spacious. "We loved the company we went with. We couldn't be happier."

Kinstruct Tiny Homes, based in Windham, is owned by Mark and Jessica Stevenson and Dylan Figelski, Jessica's brother.

Unlike prefabricated units, Kinstruct homes are built entirely on site. They are custom built with permanent foundations.

Working within local zoning requirements to provide homes that are accessible, comfortable and safe, the company will provide a free property analysis, visiting the property to determine the feasibility of

► See **Kinstruct**, Page C5

## Low inventory, 'lock-in effect' still hampering sales

■ Housing prices are up, while affordability continues to go down.

By Kathleen D. Bailey  
Special to the Union Leader

KIERA LADMAN RUSSELL has a ready explanation for why she named her real estate firm Matchmaker Realty. "I always felt that finding the right home was kind of like falling in love," the Realtor, who has been in the business since 2001, explained.

But the course of true love isn't necessarily running smoothly for this year's buyers or sellers.

The New Hampshire real estate market continues to be affected by a low inventory of housing stock, higher-than-usual listing prices, and hefty interest rates.

### No typical client, no typical day

The Meredith-based Russell works primarily with buyers, many of whom are first-time home buyers. But, she warned, there is no "typical" customer. "One of the jokes in the industry," she noted, "is that there is never a boring day. People change, markets change."

During the global pandemic, many prospective home buyers had to make multiple offers, according to Russell. That's slowed down, along with the exodus of people from the cities once they knew they could work from home in the 603. She expected to see more properties to market this spring, after the long winter. It's especially hard in the Lakes Region, because there was a lot of snow this year and



METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

Spring usually brings an uptick in real estate listings, but local inventory is still well below where Realtors would like to see it.

cold temperatures. "Typically things pick up in the spring," she said. But not yet. The business again did a back flip. This time it's partially due to the world situation, Russell said, adding, "The world is in flux. No one can deny the election has affected real estate."

The inventory has increased slightly, "but it's still less than we would like," Russell observed. The average buyer looks at 10 homes, and she's busy trying to find 10 homes for them to look at.

Once she finds them, the houses don't stay around long, according to Russell. The ADM

► See **Real estate**, Page C4

### Discussing the 'lock-in effect'



*"People are hesitant to move on because it's hard to justify the move. Even if you downsize, your interest rate could double."*

KIERA LADMAN RUSSELL  
Owner of Matchmaker Realty



*"Sellers are asking themselves, 'If the home I love sells, where will I go?' I don't have to leave. I love my low interest rate."*

SUSAN COLE  
Owner of Susan Cole Realty Group



# Using the power of imagery and branding to sell real estate

■ Using marketing assets like drone photography, 3D tours and floor plans, WolfReel helps agents stand out in a crowded real estate market.

By Robert Levey  
Special to the Union Leader

SPRING USUALLY brings an uptick in business for the real estate industry, which is a good thing for Allan Wolf of WolfReel, a company that combines creativity and technology to strengthen a client’s branding and selling power. Founded in December 2019, WolfReel helps real estate agents with trending marketing assets and provides coaching to help them execute their respective visions.

“The initial goal of WolfReel was to serve Realtors in the Lakes Region and North Country with real estate photography, along with other marketing assets such as 3D tours, drone photography, and floor plans,” said Wolf.

With COVID, things became heavily virtual. “3D tours and photography became a necessity for agents to showcase their listings virtually,” he said.

As the company grew, he became more focused on staying current on marketing trends, including social media content. For Wolf, though, it all starts with the client.

“We do not believe in a cold and cookie-cutter approach to our clients,” he said. “Every client has their own personality and brand.”

With his Realtor clients (he also works with small businesses) Wolf coaches them on not just how to best showcase their listings, but also themselves as people. “When you see a Realtor on camera, it’s not just

them giving an info dump of the home,” he explained. “It’s a method to showcase their personality and to build connection with their clientele. Some Realtors are quippy with fun skits. Others want to engage in selling the lifestyle.”

Once he learns about the agent, he helps create a plan while continuing to understand their unique likes and dislikes. “Some agents want analytical shots of a home, creating compositions that are wide and show an entire space,” he said.

Other agents, however, want a more editorial look in their photography. “This style of photography creates an intimate look at a space in a home — something you might see in interior design publications,” said Wolf.

With video, the same thing applies. “Some clients ask we keep tabs on trends,” he said. “This can be what are called gimbal movements that help us create long or short clips of footage in smooth movements.” One example of a gimbal movement is a follow shot, where the camera moves along with the subject, making the footage more dynamic.

These movements can be coupled with music, which Wolfe said gives every Realtor a chance to have a unique vision. “Why be like everyone else when you can be unique?” he said.

Ultimately, Wolf said that selling real estate is an emotional process, a belief that influences his work. “Nobody wants to watch a 3-minute drone video of a house,” he said. “They want



ALLAN WOLF

Drone photography was used for this twilight photo taken for a real estate listing for Realtor Stephanie Inglis of Lake Life Realty. The photographer was Allan Wolf, owner of WolfReel.

a concise video that makes them feel. It helps them imagine spending their lives at their new home.”

Many agents are also trying to sell the experience of the area. “This, in turn, gets more eyes on their listing and potentially more money for their seller,” added Wolf.

To learn more about WolfReel, which covers all of New Hampshire and northern Massachusetts, visit [WolfReel.media](http://WolfReel.media).

At right, Allan Wolf, owner of WolfReel, took this photo for a twilight photography project for Belknap Landscape, LLC.

ALLAN WOLF



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Real estate

or average days on the market “can be two weeks, if the house is priced right,” she said.

Susan Cole, president of the New Hampshire Association of Realtors, is concerned about the lack of houses to sell. In 2023 a “New Hampshire State Housing Needs Assessment” determined that the Granite State is 23,500 units short of the need. “It’s predicted that we will be 60,000 units short by 2030, and 90,000 units short by 2040,” she said.

Cole, who works out of the Upper Valley, saw it coming. “This was not sprung upon us,” she said. “We’ve been working our way into this crisis for the past decade.”

The mortgage rates have given rise to something called the “lock-in effect,” where homeowners are reluctant to sell because the mortgage rates on their current property are lower than the rate they would get on a new property. The lock-in effect is real, Russell said. “People are hesitant to move on because it’s hard to justify the move,” she said. “Even if you downsize, your interest rate could double.”

Cole agreed. “Sellers are asking themselves, ‘If the home I love sells, where will I go?’”

According to Cole, people on the “bubble” say to themselves, “I don’t have to leave. I love my low interest rate.”

But Russell noted that some people are still buying and selling, as their lives change. There’s death, divorce, empty nesting.

Russell has gained hope from the fact that many area towns have relaxed their restrictions on accessory dwellings. But the prices of most homes are still out of reach for most buyers. It’s not a problem for the wealthy, who easily pick up second dwellings in the Lakes Region, or move here and work from home. It’s harder for the locals. “The people who live and work here,” she said, “are struggling.”

Cole is also concerned about housing the workforce, noting that lack of housing means fewer jobs filled. Consumers will wait longer at the doctor’s office or even the hospital, she predicted.



METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

New Hampshire real estate agents are hoping to see more “For Sale” signs going up as the year goes on so they have more inventory to show buyers.

“People will start to realize, ‘Oh, the deli isn’t open,’ or their medical appointment is running late. (Lack of housing) will have an effect on people.”

According to data from the Business and Industry Association, 75% of New Hampshire business leaders report that the lack of qualified workers is keeping their business from growing.

Stats, facts and figures

The average interest rate for a 30-year fixed mortgage is currently 6.31, according to Zillow, and the average interest rate for a 15-year fixed is 5.63. The 30-year mortgage has fallen by 4 basis points, the 15-year by 3. Cole said, “The interest rates have come down a little, and that’s always helpful. I know they’ll never be back in the 2 or 3 percent range.”

Cole agreed that the locked-in factor is hard on sellers with a current low interest rate. “But eventually they are going to have to move,” she said.

The Affordability Index ranks a state’s median household income relative to the income necessary to purchase a median-

priced house. According to a site called Motto Mortgage, New Hampshire rates 45th nationally when it comes to cost of living. The median home value they cite is \$483,940, a 7% increase over 2024. The median renters pay is \$2,100 per month, and the median annual wage is \$49,980. “The affordability continues to go down,” Cole said. Housing prices are up 59 percent over the past four years, the fourth highest in the nation.

And the market is hungry. Recent data from the New Hampshire Association of Realtors lists the following average days on market for January 2025:

- Belknap County, 48 days.
- Carroll County, 62 days.
- Cheshire County, 47 days.
- Coos County, 34 days.
- Grafton County, 49 days.
- Hillsborough County, 33 days.
- Merrimack County, 45 days.
- Rockingham County, 36 days.
- Strafford County, 31 days.
- Sullivan County, 39 days.

Up close and personal

For those undaunted by the current conditions, Russell lists a plan of action for the first-

time buyer. “The first thing I tell anybody,” she said, “is talk to a lender. There’s nothing more heartbreaking than finding what you love, and it’s not in your price range.”

Russell also advises dealing with a buyer’s agent. And, she advises, find someone who can educate you. “This is not a transaction, a deal, a purchase,” she said. “This is their life, their whole world, the memories they want to make. Figure out what you need and want and then chisel it down if need be.”

Russell will set up a search based on the buyer’s parameters, and the computer will “spit out” a match. But the buyers are doing their homework, too. “They’re on Zillow, Realtor.com, they’re looking at real estate all the time,” she said. “Sometimes the customer finds things I didn’t.” Then, she said, her role is as a facilitator.

For 2025, Cole is hoping to see a more balanced market — the right number of buyers, the right number of sellers.

Her recent efforts have included work with the new New Hampshire Housing Supply Coalition. There are four main members, Cole said: The New Hampshire Association of Realtors, the New Hampshire Home Builders Association, the Business and Industry Association, and Housing Action NH. “We have four main groups, and more than 20 additional support organizations,” she said.

The coalition is built on three pillars: Land Use Reform, Regulatory and Permitting Reform, and Program and Funding Support.

At press time, Russell is dealing with the lock-in effect herself and facing the same situations that her clients face. Her daughters are grown, but they want to stay in the Lakes Region. They cannot afford to buy or even rent at today’s current rates, so Russell is ditching her single-family home for a duplex. “And I have three of my buyers in the same boat,” she said.

“My house is going on the market next week,” she said, adding, “I’m curious about how long it will take.”

Stove

stoves, furnaces, fireplace inserts and boilers, making this a versatile heating method. An added bonus is that they are easy to store and take up less room than traditional cord wood. Modern wood pellet stoves auto light, auto feed and can be controlled by a thermostat, remote or smartphone app, providing the conveniences of modern heating, with the ambiance, warmth and beauty of wood-fired heat.

• **What factors should I consider when choosing an appliance?** Consider where you’ll place it in your home to ensure you have enough room. You should also factor in the size of the space you’re heating and your aesthetic needs. Lastly, look for an easy-to-clean appliance that will minimize ash production.

• **When buying pellets, what should I consider?** Seek out high-quality pellets that light easily and burn efficiently. Check out the product’s British Thermal Unit (BTU) rating, which indicates its energy output. The higher the BTUs, the hotter the pellets will burn. You should also buy pellets that maintain an ash content below 1% of the total pellet weight. And check to make sure the pellet manufacturer is certified by the Pellet Fuels Institute.

To learn more about wood pellet heating, check out the educational resources found at [pelleteat.com](http://pelleteat.com).

Spring may be here, but home heating should be top of mind. If you’re considering wood pellet heating, plan now so you’ll be ready for next winter.

Read the Union Leader Homes section every Friday.

About Us:

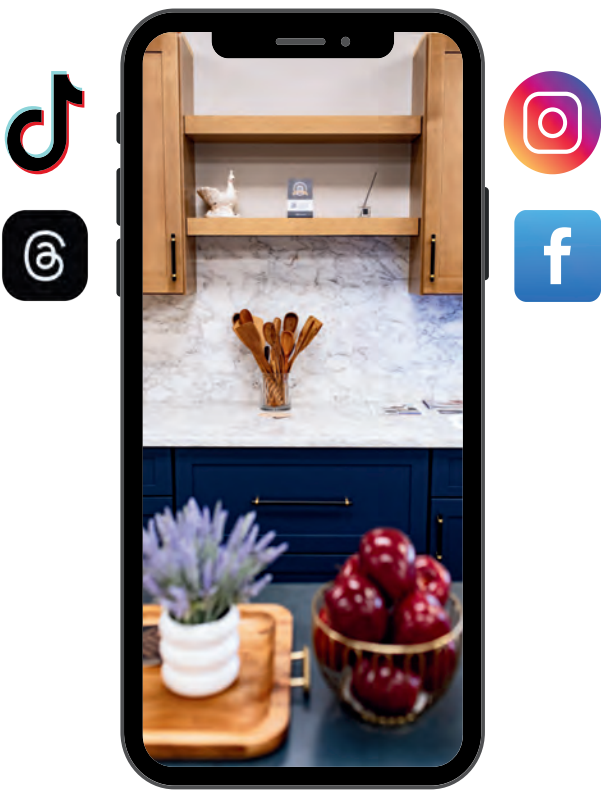
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# Kinstruct

From Page C1

putting an ADU on it and provide an estimate.

If the customer wants one built, the company's design team will customize a plan to meet their lifestyle and needs, handle all the permitting work, construct the unit on site, and conduct a walk-through with the customer to make sure they're happy.

Mark Stevenson has an extensive background in construction, Jessica Stevenson is a real estate broker, and Figelski's background is in commercial roofing.

The Stevensons started the company in the fall of 2023. They came to this type of work through their own personal experience. Mark's widowed mother, Mary, has lived with the family, which includes three kids, for several years.

The family is building an attached ADU to their home for Mary to use.

"We know exactly why someone would be interested in an ADU because we are our target market. We are in that phase where we have aging parents to think about and also young adults to think about," Jessica Stevenson said. "In the housing market, where is everyone going to go? As a family we came up with this ADU solution. We thought it would be a great solution for other families."

The company builds studio, one-bedroom and two-bedroom units, and has 11 designs to work from. Typically, designs start at approximately \$275 per square foot. The units can be made fully ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) compliant.

According to the company, to be legally considered as an ADU, the structure, whose utilities pull from the existing main home, must offer accommodations for eating and cooking, sleeping and

sanitation.

Under current New Hampshire law, all communities must allow ADUs but can regulate things like maximum size, parking requirements, setbacks, and whether they must be attached to the primary residence.

The company's turn-around time for breaking ground to occupancy is three to four months. The timeline for permitting can vary from three weeks to three months depending on the community.

"I think having their own dedicated space while living independently and having the benefit of having family nearby is very appealing to folks," Stevenson said.

The company, which plans to open an office and showroom in Pembroke, has also built structures in Northwood and Merrimack and has ongoing projects in Deerfield and Jefferson.

Not every lender loans for these types of projects, but Stevenson is excited that "lenders are stepping up to the plate. There's a handful of lenders in New Hampshire, local to New Hampshire, that now offer ADU specific construction loans, which allows you to keep your existing mortgage in place."

Some retirees use funds from 401Ks and other retirement accounts to fund a purchase.

"We've seen families use a home equity line of credit or maybe mom sells her existing house and uses the cash to build on her son's property, that kind of scenario," she said.

To learn more, visit [kinstructtinyhomes.com](https://kinstructtinyhomes.com). The site includes photographs of models, pricing information, answers to frequently asked questions, information about the building process, and a downloadable catalog.



PHOTO PROVIDED BY KINSTRUCT TINY HOMES

Kinstruct Tiny Homes built this studio-style dwelling, part of their "Sunapee" series. On the Kinstruct website, the Sunapee Series is described as "simplicity and comfort in a compact design." The base models start with size ranges of 288 and 384 square feet.



PHOTO PROVIDED BY KINSTRUCT TINY HOMES

Here is a finished "Tecumseh" model built attached to an existing home. The Tecumseh is a two-bedroom model offered that can be as large as 1,000 square feet.



PHOTO PROVIDED BY KINSTRUCT TINY HOMES

This illustration shows the two-car, two-bedroom model in Kinstruct Tiny Homes' "Gunstock Garage Series." This series also includes a one-car, one-bedroom model.

*"In the housing market, where is everyone going to go? As a family we came up with this ADU solution. We thought it would be a great solution for other families."*

JESSICA STEVENSON  
co-owner of Kinstruct Tiny Homes



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# Optimize your connectivity at home

■ Merrimack Valley Wi-Fi Pros give customers seamless, worry-free Wi-Fi coverage.

By Robert Levey  
Special to the Union Leader

IN THIS DIGITAL AGE, where many people work from home at least part of the time, dependable Wi-Fi is not a luxury but a necessity — a recognition that became clear to Rod Gregoire in 2020.

As an engineer in the computer networking field when the global pandemic started, Gregoire noticed colleagues struggling with unreliable Wi-Fi connections while trying to work remotely.

“Like everyone else, I was on constant video calls, and every single one had people — often highly technical experts — struggling with shaky Wi-Fi,” he said. “It hit me — if even they couldn’t sort it out, regular folks must be really stuck.”

After digging into Wi-Fi troubleshooting and testing fixes with friends and family, Gregoire knew he could “help people get reliable Wi-Fi the right way,” which spawned Merrimack Valley Wi-Fi Pros at the end of 2020. “We specialize in delivering reliable, high-speed Wi-Fi solutions tailored to each customer’s needs,” he said.

Serving northern Massachusetts and southern New Hampshire, Gregoire



METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

Whether it’s for work or entertainment, many families need optimal Wi-Fi coverage at home where multiple devices will be used at the same time.

said their core services include professional Wi-Fi installations, network optimization, and troubleshooting for homes and small businesses. His vision is to ensure seamless coverage and performance while making sense of complex connectivity challenges.

“Our goal is to simplify the process so our clients get fast, frustration-free internet without the hassle,” he explained.

Distilled into five steps, their process consists of “a smart, data-driven approach to pinpoint and solve the real problem the right way.” This process begins with a full Wi-Fi survey to uncover the root cause. Next, they craft a custom solution and share a clear cost upfront.

“We install it with care, then repeat the survey to validate the fix, showing you the results instantly,” said Gregoire. “It’s a simplified way to prove the problem’s gone and your Wi-Fi is working correctly. When we finish, the owner is in charge of their network.”

They use a similar approach for new construction homes or major renovations, although the first step is different. Instead of a Wi-Fi survey, they use advanced design tools to craft a system that ensures excellent coverage and performance throughout the entire home (inside and outside) while respecting its aesthetics.

“We strategically position hardware to remain out of sight while delivering ro-

bust coverage, striking the perfect balance between form and function,” he added. “These homes are ready for whatever comes next for Wi-Fi and connectivity.”

Why choose a local installer? Gregoire said the difference is their personal approach. “Unlike big corporate ISPs with one-size-fits-all fixes, we customize every solution to fit each home or small business perfectly,” he said. “Our reputation rides on every job, so we make it make sense and keep it simple, delivering results our customers can count on.”

To learn more about Merrimack Valley Wi-Fi Pros, a family-owned business in Chelmsford, Mass., visit [mvwifi pros.com](http://mvwifi pros.com).

*“We strategically position hardware to remain out of sight while delivering robust coverage, striking the perfect balance between form and function. These homes are ready for whatever comes next for Wi-Fi and connectivity.”*

ROD GREGOIRE  
owner of Merrimack Valley Wi-Fi Pros



METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

## Add luxury to your bathroom

Metro Creative Connection

Kitchens and bathrooms are two popular areas to address when renovating a home. Modernize Home Services says 26% of sellers make bathroom improvements to their homes before listing. Midscale bath remodels will net a return on investment of about 64%, while a luxury bathroom overhaul has an ROI of about 57%.

Here are some luxurious features to consider:

### Heated floors

Heated floors are functional and also aesthetically appealing because homeowners don’t have to factor in baseboard heaters or forced-air vents.

### Steam showers

A steam shower is similar to a sauna and utilizes a steam generator to produce steam in a single area.

### Soaking tub

A deep soaking tub separate from the shower offers the opportunity for luxury and relaxation.

### Floating vanity

A floating vanity is mounted directly to the wall to leave space underneath. Better Homes & Gardens says a floating vanity can lend an airy feel to a bathroom.

### Frameless shower

A frameless (glass) shower door is not only luxurious but also functional for people who want to age in place. With no edge or lip to step over to enter the shower, anyone with mobility challenges can walk into a frameless shower safely.

### Water closet

If space allows, separating the toilet in a water closet from the rest of the bathroom space affords even more privacy. Plus, in couple’s bathrooms, a water closet enables two to use the bathroom at the same time for different functions.



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# Humane ways to address those pesky uninvited garden guests

Metro Creative Connection

After a homeowner toils in the yard tending the soil and planting, it's imperative that a garden be given the best chance to thrive. However, the natural wildlife that shares the space might see that newly cultivated land as the perfect place to enjoy an easy meal or gather nesting materials.

Every gardener likely has a tale about chipmunks, squirrels, woodchucks, and rabbits making nuisances of themselves in the garden. Many of these animals seem to have a taste for bulbs and other plants, which can wreak havoc on what gardeners carefully plan and plant.

Finding balance so everyone can get along may require patience and some well-crafted

deterrents.

**Provide food elsewhere**

Try luring the animals away to another area of the yard where the meal is even easier to come by. Squirrels and chipmunks love to dig and bury their caches, so a far-off corner with freshly tilled soil along with some berries, nuts and additional treats might attract them to that area instead of a newly established garden.

**Install fencing**

While chipmunks and squirrels can scale fences easily, such acrobatics may be more challenging for lumbering groundhogs or rabbits. Make digging more difficult by laying chicken wire fencing on top of the soil and stake it down in some areas.

**Use a scent deterrent**

Some animals are put off by the smell of other animals or aromas they find unpleasant. The capsaicin in red pepper and cayenne can be off-putting to these animals, so sprinkling it around the garden may ward off pests but not harm the plants. Just reapply after each rain.

Similarly, some people have had luck using peppermint. Plant mint around where you do not want the squirrels and chipmunks. Since mint can grow fast and become invasive, it's best to plant in containers and move accordingly.

**Use water or movement**

Animals can be scared away if they are sprayed with water, so a well-aimed water gun can

chase away the animals when a gardener is able to stand watch. It may be easier to set up pinwheels that blow in the wind, or hang aluminum pie plates or old compact discs from strings near the garden, which may deter animals from getting too close.

**Build a greenhouse**

When dealing with tenacious squirrels and chipmunks, the only solution may be to block off all access. Utilize an enclosed greenhouse for the garden, which will keep animals out and even extend the growing season.

Many animals can become nuisances in a yard, particularly in and around gardens. Some humane solutions like these could remedy the situation and restore peace in your garden.



METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION  
Chipmunks are known for stealing nesting materials from gardens.

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# Rounding out home interior trends

Houzz notes that gentle curves and rounded edges embody the organic modern styles that many current homeowners love. Rounded dining tables and similarly circular coffee tables may merit consideration among homeowners who want to embrace popular trends.



## ROUNDED FURNITURE

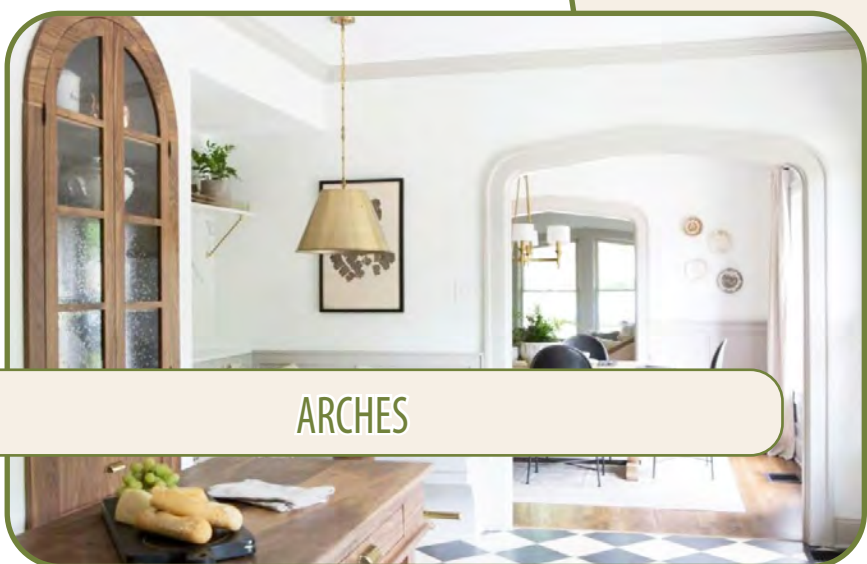
If it's a touch of history homeowners want, kitchen range alcoves might be just the project for them. Range alcoves call an earlier time to mind when wood burning stoves were commonplace. The report from Houzz notes range alcoves immediately draw attention, which undoubtedly adds to their appeal.



## STOVE ALCOVE

Online renovation experts at Houzz suggest these trends will be particularly popular in the year ahead.

Story and Photos by Metro Creative Connection



ARCHES

Houzz cites arches among the more popular modern trends, and the experts at Better Homes & Gardens note this unique, eye-catching style has been gaining popularity for several years. Better Homes & Gardens suggests that part of the appeal of arched doorways could be their deviation from a more traditional door shape. That uniqueness draws the attention of residents and visitors alike, and Houzz notes that arched windows, cabinets and even millwork details are part of the pivot toward arches.



## WOOD FOR WARMTH

Homeowners who hear “wood and warmth” might think fireplaces, but Houzz reports that wood elements are being incorporated into interior designs as a means to giving homes a more cozy vibe. Ceiling beams, trim, wall paneling, and cabinetry are utilizing wood to add warmth to a home.

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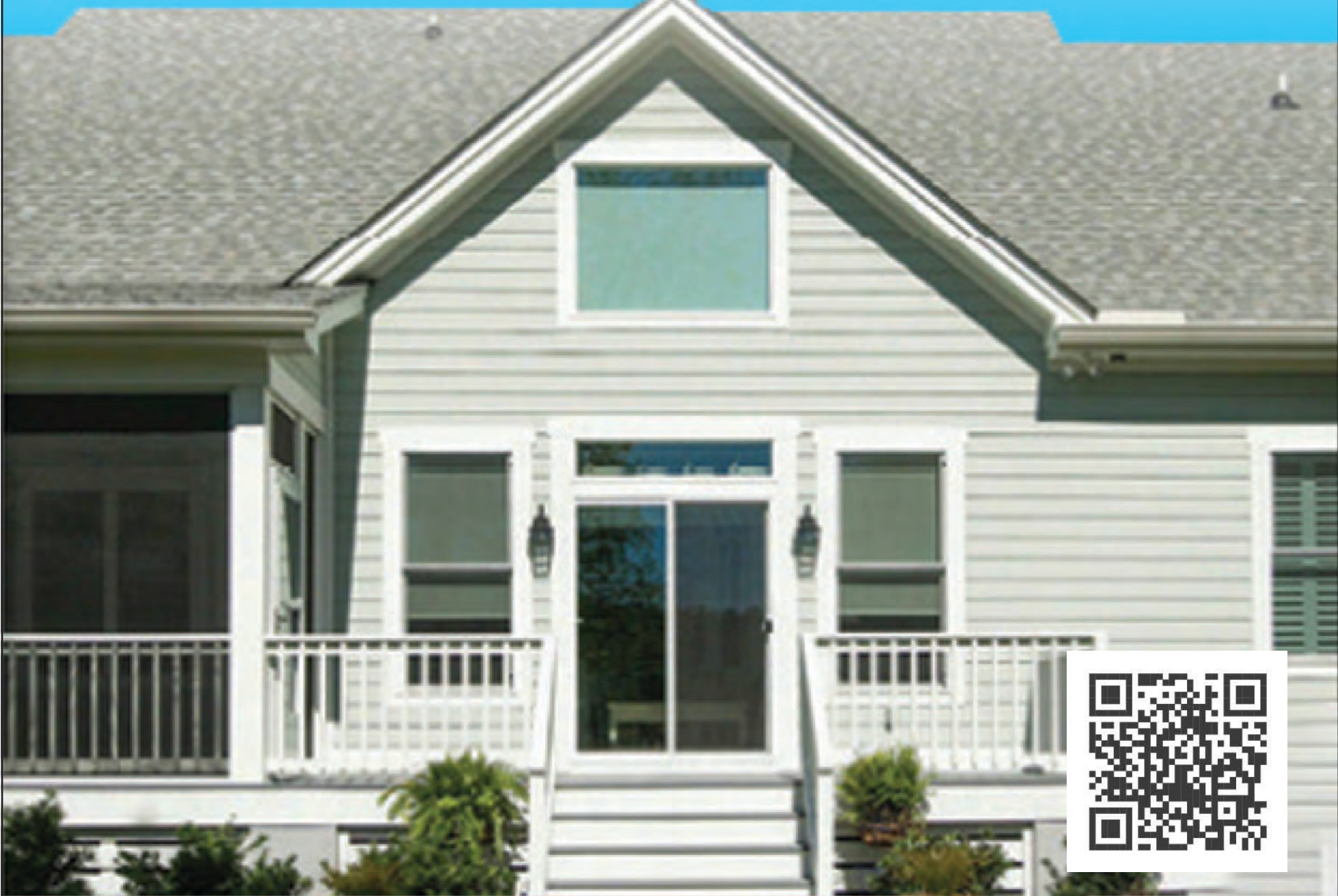
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METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

Warmer days are coming and many Granite Staters will start to enjoy using their backyard spaces again.

# Create a peaceful backyard retreat

Metro Creative Connection

Backyards have undergone quite a transformation over the last decade-plus. The days when patios and decks were all a backyard living space had to offer are largely a thing of the past, as homeowners have realized just how valuable it can be to commit to a stunning backyard.

The real estate experts at Zillow estimate that homes with backyard features such as outdoor televisions, outdoor showers and outdoor kitchens command 3.1% more than expected upon reaching the market.

If 3.1% doesn't sound like a lot, it actually equates to nearly \$11,000 on a typical home.

But there's more to gain than money when converting a backyard space into a relaxing respite. Such spaces can provide a welcoming escape from the hustle and bustle of daily life, all the while giving homeowners and residents a comfortable space to soak in the great outdoors. With that in mind, homeowners can take the following steps to establish a peaceful backyard retreat.

## Refresh the landscape

Even if your vision is centered on

outdoor furniture and a space that accommodates movie nights under the stars, it's still best to refresh the existing landscape if it needs a little upkeep. Overgrown trees, hedges and bushes can create the same cluttered vibe that dominates interior spaces overrun with items.

If necessary, work with a local tree service or landscape architect to trim, or even remove, trees and hedges that are crowding the backyard and making it feel claustrophobic or giving it an unkempt look. Aim for a landscape that affords a balance of sun and shade so the space is as comfortable as possible throughout the day.

## Set up multiple gathering spaces

Once a backyard retreat is established, everyone who calls the property home might find the space hard to resist. Keep this in mind when planning the space and aim to set up multiple gathering spaces.

An outdoor kitchen with a nearby dinner table can be a great space to enjoy al fresco dining, but a separate area to read a book or watch a movie or ballgame can make the space more versatile. Some may want to relax away from the noise of the grill area, and multiple gathering spaces

ensures there's always a peaceful spot to unwind out back.

## Add a water feature

Running water has a way of calming the nerves, and that's good to keep in mind when planning a backyard retreat. Water features run the gamut from garden ponds to koi ponds to fountains to hot tubs. Homeowners can identify which feature best aligns with their idea of relaxation and then work with a landscape architect to ensure it's installed in their backyard oasis.

## Don't forget shade

Even the most ardent sun worshipers likely won't want to be exposed to the sun at all times when relaxing in their backyards. Strategically chosen means of providing shade can make spaces enjoyable all day long. Consider umbrellas, gazebos, pergolas, and even retractable awnings to cover patios and decks when the sun is at its highest each afternoon.

If you plan to spend ample time in the grass, make that more enjoyable by planting shade trees, which also can protect the grass from drought and make it more comfortable underfoot.



PHOTO PROVIDED BY DISTANT HILL GARDENS

The greenery and flowers are in full splendor during the summer at Distant Hill Gardens in Walpole.

# Looking for landscape inspiration? Visit local gardens

It's still a little too early to visit the many public gardens around the Granite State, but by mid- to late May, many will be blooming and ready for visitors. Here are a few suggestions:

- Prescott Park, Portsmouth
- Bedrock Gardens, Lee
- The Fells, Newbury
- Tarbin Gardens, Franklin
- Fuller Gardens, North Hampton
- Distant Hill Gardens, Walpole
- Pickity Place, Mason
- Kirkwood Gardens, Holderness
- Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site, Cornish
- Maple Hill Gardens, Hollis
- Strawberry Banke, Portsmouth

Check each location's website as some of these sites have specific opening dates and charge admission to enter.

## SAVE THE DATE:

Keene Home Expo, April 5-6

The Keene Home Expo is scheduled for April 5 and 6 at the Keene Ice Arena, 380 Marlboro St., Keene. Expo hours will be 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday and 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Sunday.

A full list of exhibitors for this year's expo can be found at [homebuildersassocswnh.com/exhibitors](http://homebuildersassocswnh.com/exhibitors). About 100 businesses are signed up to participate, including home builders, remodelers, roofers, electricians, plumbers and more. Realtors and lenders will be on site as well to visit with perspective home buyers and sellers.

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# Listings show buyers are looking for ‘cozy’

**Metro Creative Connection**

Wood could be having a moment among modern home buyers. According to the real estate experts at Zillow, the term “cozy” appeared in 35% more real estate listings in 2024 than in 2023.

Though various components can help to create a cozy vibe inside a home, wood has long been a go-to material when interior designers attempt to add warmth to a property.

The home renovation experts at Houzz also cite wood-infused architectural warmth among its 10 most popular home trends in the coming year.

Homeowners who want to capitalize on this trend before putting their homes



METRO CREATIVE CONNECTION

The vibe homeowners are looking for is “cozy,” a trend that can be achieved by adding more natural wood elements.

on the market or those who simply love the idea of adding more wood-based warmth in their homes can consider installing ceiling beams, wood wall paneling or even wood trim throughout their homes.

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# The beauty and benefits of lighting up your landscape

■ Lighting up your outdoor space could result in a savings on your home insurance since well-lit areas are safer for walking and deter intruders.

Metro Creative Connection

Homeowners know there's no shortage of ways to tweak a property. Some may lament that the work associated with home ownership is never done, but owning a house also provide endless opportunities to upgrade the spaces people call home. Landscape lighting has become increasingly popular in recent years. That popularity is undoubtedly due to a number of variables, and each highlights a benefit of installing landscape lighting around a property.

### Affordability

Some may think of big budget projects like kitchen remodels or room additions when pondering home renovations. Such projects can have a dramatic impact on the look and feel of a home, but landscape lighting can be equally transformative at a fraction of the cost of larger undertakings. The home renovation experts at Angi.com estimate the average landscape lighting project costs around \$4,000, making affordability a notable benefit of the



Guests will enjoy the ambience provided by landscape lighting, and it will be easier for them to move around safely.

project.

### Appearance

There's no denying the aesthetic appeal of a well-lit landscape at night. Landscape lighting can be utilized to draw attention to awe-inspiring components of a

landscape, whether it's natural features like gardens and foliage or manmade components like architectural features. Improved appearance can increase curb appeal, which is often associated with how a home looks during daylight hours. But photographs

of a well-lit nighttime landscape can impress buyers as well.

### Cost savings

Landscape lighting might help homeowners reduce the cost of their homeowners insurance. Researchers at PolicyGenius.

com found that insurance companies typically offer a discount of 2% to 5% to homeowners who install a home security system. Insurance providers may offer additional savings to homeowners who pair such systems with landscape lighting, which can be a deterrent to burglars who prefer to operate under a cloak of darkness.

### Safety

Insurance firms may discount premiums because of landscape lighting because they view it as a deterrent to potential criminals. But landscape lighting also makes moving around a property at night safer for residents and guests. Lighting can be used to illuminate walkways, outdoor living rooms, patios around pools, and other areas where residents and guests will be walking at night, which can reduce the risk of falls and injuries that may result from such spills.

### Return on investment

Savvy homeowners consider a renovation's return on investment before deciding to go forward with a project. Studies vary, but the National Association of Realtors indicates landscape lighting can recoup as much as 70 percent of homeowner's investment in the project at resale. When viewed through the lens of ROI, the cost of installing landscape lighting is even less.



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– DAN P., TOPSFIELD

"We love [our Gibraltar Pool] because it adds so much to our back yard and our summers. We are retired and enjoy swimming laps. But more importantly, is the fun we have with our grandchildren. Our two 11 year olds when they visit are in the pool all day. And our 15 month granddaughter loves being in the pool."

– MARY B., OXFORD







# SPRING

## Home Improvement & Real Estate





BUBUTU/DREAMSTIME/TNS

Take a look at your decks and patios, or any outdoor entertaining spaces. You want them to be well-maintained and safe, so look for any damaged railings, boards, or steps, as well as loose nails or other fasteners, and repair as needed.

ASK ANGI

### How should I prepare my home for spring?

By **Angie Hicks**  
*Ask Angi (TNS)*

After a long winter, it's nearly time to de-winterize your home and get ready for spring. Here are some of my top spring maintenance projects to give you a good start for the warmer seasons.

Spring is the perfect time to clean your gutters. They probably collected a lot of debris in the fall and winter months, so clean them out to get a fresh start before the spring and summer showers start.

Your gutters play a big role in protecting not only your roof, but your foundation, basement

and erosion prevention in your yard. Overflowing gutters can cause a lot of problems, and they can all be solved by twice-yearly gutter cleaning.

While you're at it, inspect your roof for damage.

Take note of any damaged or missing shingles, loose or misplaced chimney bricks, signs of deterioration around your chimney, and cracks or creases in your gutters that allow water to drip through. Bring in a pro to fix any issues before they get worse.

There's nothing better

► See **Ask Angi**, Page D3

DESIGN RECIPES



PROVIDED PHOTO

Instead of a single long sofa, an elongated sofa is created using modular sections.

### Modular design perfect for many spaces

By **Cathy Hobbs**  
*Tribune News Service (TNS)*

There is a reason why sectional furniture is so popular and utilized in various ways. In a word, it's versatility. From desks that can be configured in different ways to sofas, coffee tables and more, modular is the ideal

choice for those looking for flexibility and versatility.

When considering purchasing modular furniture elements, here are some top tips.

**Quick Design Recipes Tip:** Be sure to purchase pieces in an identical fabric or finish. This will allow for the most versatility when looking to group various

elements together in the same room.

Why modular?

**Perfect for unusual spaces.** Modular furniture easily allows for various configurations.

**Ideal for large spaces.** When a space is overly large, modular pieces allow one to group various elements together to cover

larger areas.

**Longevity.** Unlike an "all in one solution" modular pieces allow for the flexibility of changing out a single piece as opposed to having to replace an entire item of furniture.

**Room to stretch or reduce.** If you get tired of a current

► See **Modular**, Page D2



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Various modular selections such as sofa pieces, coffee tables and ottomans fill a large living space allowing for both flexibility and versatility.

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## Modular

From Page D1

configuration, modular elements can be added or subtracted easily without having to purchase additional items.

**Adaptive and flexible.**  
Smaller modular furniture pieces such as chaises and ottomans can be used as a stand alone or as a “con-

nector” connecting various furniture pieces together in the same space.

♦  
Cathy Hobbs is a nationally recognized real estate stager and celebrity interior designer based in New York City. Cathy is the owner of the NYC + Hudson Valley-based interior design, home staging firm Cathy Hobbs Design Recipes and the author of the book “Home Design Recipes.” [www.cathyhobbs.com](http://www.cathyhobbs.com).

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Jae 2018 T and John M. Cavaretta to John J. and Allison G. Sansone, 298 Haranits Lake Rd., 3/14/2025, \$925,000.

Foskitt Ft and Paul J. Foskitt to Travis and Ketty Mc Gowan, 56 Pomp Rd., 3/14/2025, \$494,000.

### DERRY

51 Birch LLC and Weathervane Hldg li LLC to Brett P. Cate, 51 Birch St., 3/11/2025, \$810,000.

John P. Lally to R F Kalagher T Gst Exempt and Kellie Kalagher-Lally, Goodhue Rd., 3/14/2025, \$700,000.

Carol R. Livingston-Spell to Tjb Homes LLC, 40 Hillside Ave., 3/14/2025, \$275,000.

Renie A. Foote to Tjb Homes LLC, 5 Silvestri Cir., Unit 19, 3/14/2025, \$225,000.

### DUNBARTON

Paul B Cathcart RET and Jeffrey J. Cathcart to Cheryl M. Hey, Black Brook Rd., 3/12/2025, \$551,000.

York Bldg and Remodeling LL to Ronald R. Marcoux and Charlene K. Huard-Marcoux, 44 Fairway Dr., 3/10/2025, \$1,210,000.

### GOFFSTOWN

Matthew and David Gagne to Back Mountain Road T and Samantha A. Kiesman, 935 Back Mountain Rd., 3/12/2025, \$579,000.

Hannah W. Wacera to Celso N. Baez and Amra Nunez, 3 Timberwood Dr., Unit 305, 3/11/2025, \$267,533.

Jeremiah D. and Edward R. Lauriat to Edward R Lauriat RET and Edward R. Lauriat, N/A., 3/10/2025, \$180,000.

### HOOKSETT

Kimberly A. and Marco S. Lacasse to Seth and Christine Tardiff, 12 Joanne Dr., 3/10/2025, \$460,000.

Brian and Donna Fitzpatrick to Spencer J. Vaccaro, 47 Lindsay Rd., 3/11/2025, \$659,000.

Paul J. Hennigan to Brian P. and

Heather Hennigan, 126 Mammoth Rd., Unit 17, 3/11/2025, \$180,000.

Summit Vw Of Hooksett LLC to Emma Roy and Benjamin Bolduc, Old Mill Ln., 3/10/2025, \$200,000.

### LITCHFIELD

M and Christine Lynch T and Michael R. Lynch to Kiarra and Andrew Gadzik, 1 Rotterdam Dr., 3/12/2025, \$600,000.

### LONDONDERRY

T and Donna Gyorda Lt and Timothy C. Gyorda to Michelle E Callahan RET and Michelle E. Callahan, 5 Buckingham Dr., 3/14/2025, \$905,000.

James B Morreale lrt and Jay B. Morreale to Isabelle Goldsack, 193 N Capitol Hill Dr., 3/12/2025, \$190,000.

Schechinger Ft and Paul R. Schechinger to Karen and Terrianne Archer, 27 White Plains Ave., 3/14/2025, \$851,000.

### MANCHESTER

John A. and Jeanne M. Hill to August Kaiser, 1744 Brown Ave., 3/12/2025, \$473,000.

Richard J. Nimmo to Steven M. Woitkun Jr, 1392 Candia Rd., 3/14/2025, \$540,000.

Joseph M. Jr and Joanne Bullock to Kenneth J Hajjar T and Arlene Hajjar, 29 Crescent Ln., 3/14/2025, \$392,000.

Noah and Samantha Ouellette to Luis J. and Ana M. Arroyo, 27 Day St., 3/14/2025, \$426,000.

Dunlap Building LLC to Project Elm LLC, 959 Elm St., 3/4/2025, \$2,150,000.

Fortin Ft and Robert A. Fortin to R H and Janice H Mcelroy Ft and Janice H. Mcelroy, Elm St., 3/10/2025, \$713,533.

Austin Sprague to Patricia L. Morse and Michael Rivard, 111 English Village Rd., Unit 202, 3/13/2025, \$210,000.

Behic Canturk to Vincent and Celia Zinssner, English Village Rd., Unit 36,

3/10/2025, \$205,000.

Alicia M. Rondeau and Nigel Flores to Makano Mlongecha and Bitu Tambwe, 250 Goffstown Rd., 3/10/2025, \$499,000.

Matthew D. Schuff to Ronald J J Cathcart T and Ronald J. Cathcart, 178 Karatzas Ave., Unit 178, 3/14/2025, \$360,000.

Clifford G. Weems to Holly Reynolds, 212 Knollwood Way, Unit 212, 3/14/2025, \$485,000.

314 Lk Ave LLC to Three Nh Guys LLC, 308 Lake Ave., 3/12/2025, \$1,150,000.

Heidenreich Alan E Est and Frank E. Heidenreich to Juan C. and Ana G. Ascencio, 53 Lincoln St., 3/12/2025, \$435,000.

Marcus D. Gould to James R. Provencher Jr, 664 Maple St., 3/10/2025, \$700,000.

Jennifer and Andrew Schwab to 323 LLC, 95-195 Mcgregor St., 3/14/2025, \$187,000.

Leslie and Kenneth Nollet to Nicholas G. and Justine D. Comeau, 545 N Adams St., 3/14/2025, \$622,000.

Janet A Chalmers RET and Carl G. Dicio Jr to Christine and Richard Macriganis, 6 Northbrook Dr., Unit 603, 3/10/2025, \$255,000.

Paul Kan and Kim Kry to Bethany A. and Daniel L. Destefano, 160 Ohio Ave., 3/14/2025, \$565,000.

R and Lorraine Fitts Ft and Lorraine M. Fitts to Michael Oshaughnessy T and Michael Oshaughnessy, Riverfront Condo, Unit 215, 3/10/2025, \$450,000.

Amoskeag Apartments LLC to Amoskeag Apt Owner LLC, 65 State St., 3/6/2025, \$20, 200,000.

William Bernard RET and Kara Bernard to Rahzel O. Parrilla, 22 W Rosedale Ave., 3/10/2025, \$520,000.

Andrew Cherna and Katherine C. Keller to Mower Ft and David D. Mower, 119

Walnut St., Unit D, 3/13/2025, \$425,000.

Maurice R. Gagnon to Highland Vent Group LLC, 475 Wilson St., 3/11/2025, \$500,000.

### MERRIMACK

Nicholas and Colbi Desjardins to Anthony P. Joppie, 21 Chestnut Cir., Unit 21, 3/14/2025, \$399,000.

Vason Srin to Branden and Robin Greb, 16 Dunbarton Dr., 3/11/2025, \$736,000.

Adam and Kristina Gilmer to Signature Homes LLC, 2 Farmer Rd., 3/14/2025, \$295,000.

Conrad E Schiebout RET and Ryan Schiebout to Jane and Donald Poitras, 20 Stearns Ln., Unit 20, 3/13/2025, \$515,000.

### NASHUA

Linda S. Miller to Oleg Mikhalskiy, 18 Albury Stone Cir., Unit 18, 3/10/2025, \$465,000.

Jose R. and Maria Ramos to Jean E. and Shannice R. Bien-Aime, 67 Allds St., 3/10/2025, \$420,000.

Conway Greenwood LLC to Rose and Hipolita Luna, 5 Autumn Leaf Dr., Unit 16, 3/12/2025, \$164,000.

Rg Dev Associates LLC to Sameet S. Patel, 4 Cold Brook Cir., Unit 9, 3/10/2025, \$877,933.

James J Sullivan Jr RET and James J. Sullivan 3rd to Michael S. and Melissa A. Gagerges, 10 Dogwood Dr., Unit 10, 3/13/2025, \$75,000.

Eli S. Gonzalez to Tong Ren, 10 Dow St., 3/11/2025, \$510,000.

Phillip and Misty Carpenter to Brandon and Jillian Cox, 67 Elgin St., 3/14/2025, \$571,000.

Margaret Hartwell to Lingqing Gao and Guangyu Zhou, Greenwood Condo, Unit 7, 3/10/2025, \$295,000.

Tracy and William Finley to Jcb Renovations LLC, 32 Hanover St., 3/11/2025, \$180,000.

Lawrence M. Jr and Michelle R. Murphy to Michael B. Cater, 4 Hopi Dr., 3/14/2025, \$600,000.

Gyung O. Cahill to Maria D. and Antonio Reis, 65 Manchester St., 3/10/2025, \$890,000.

Bielawski Eugenia Est and Barbara Bielawski to Ryan P. Linehan and Rachel E. Barnard, 18 Massachusetts Dr., 3/10/2025, \$531,000.

Michael R. Maccorkle to Luc and Maura Surette, 317 Pine St., 3/10/2025, \$440,000.

Noreen L. Henrich RET and Noreen L. Henrich to Zheng Li and Huanlin He, N/A., 3/14/2025, \$910,000.

### NEW BOSTON

S and R Hld Company LLC to Gerald Murchison, 85 Lorden Rd., 3/10/2025, \$829,000.

### PEMBROKE

John JT Godfrey RET and John J. Godfrey to Shawn P. and Cassandra M. Donnelly, 237 4th Range Rd., 3/10/2025, \$625,000.

Ryan M. Frick to Kaitlin and Connor Zingales, 49 Broadway, 3/10/2025, \$440,000.

Tommy A. and Thomas A. Flowers to Andrew and Marissa Cantara, 719 Eley Ln., 3/11/2025, \$375,000.

Proven Homes LLC to Zikreta and Zumret Malagic, Nest Townhomes Condo, Unit 11E, 3/10/2025, \$406,933.

### RAYMOND

Sjd Rt and Ronald A. Severino to Chye A. and Levi T. Liedtke, 39 Freetown Rd., Unit 7, 3/13/2025, \$315,000.

## Ask Angi

From Page D1

than letting fresh spring air into your home. Before you open your windows for the first time, deep clean them to get rid of any dirt or insects that accumulated throughout the winter. Patch or replace any holes or tears in screens, replace any caulk as needed, and lubricate door and window tracks and hinges. I also recommend preparing your lawn tools for the extra work they'll need

to do in the spring and summer months. Sharpen your gardening tools, make sure your lawn mower is working, and adjust the timer for your sprinklers. If you have an irrigation

system, many localities require it to be inspected by a pro before turning it on for the season. Take a look at your decks and patios, or any outdoor entertaining spaces. You

want them to be well-maintained and safe, so look for any damaged railings, boards, or steps, as well as loose nails or other fasteners, and repair as needed. Spray water on your deck

and check to see if it beads. If it doesn't, it's a good time to reseal the wood. Pressure wash your deck, driveways and walkways to give your outdoor spaces a fresh start to the season. My last tip is to get your HVAC system serviced each spring. This will ensure the system is working properly and won't give you any problems when summer rolls around. It's always a good idea to

get your air conditioning inspected before the warm season, and your HVAC tech can help identify small problems before they become big ones. They'll also take a look at your heating system to make sure it's working well after running hard all winter.

◆  
Tweet your home care questions with #AskingAngi and we'll try to answer them in a future column.

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