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This special Home Beautiful guide will be featured on the *Bloom Magazine* website, magbloom.com, for a full year.



Evolving With the Community

When Bailey & Weiler Design/Build launched almost 20 years ago, homeowners were moving into the suburbs to build custom homes. As the availability of building lots in Bloomington has decreased, Don Weiler says the housing trend reveals a migration back toward downtown and a growth in remodeling existing houses. His company is now splitting its projects between building custom homes and remodeling projects, which could include one room or an entire house. "People want to move closer to town, and they still do want a single-family home, and there are not a lot of lots available," he says, explaining why the trend has shifted. "We have evolved over time. You have to do what the market asks you to do."

While paying attention to the market's needs, Bailey & Weiler also considers the community's needs. "The challenge for Bloomington is to keep that mix of all the different income levels and styles of home," Weiler says. "You have to maintain affordable housing close to town."

That's one reason Bailey & Weiler is heavily involved in Habitat for Humanity. "In addition to financially supporting Habitat, we contribute our expertise to build affordable workforce housing in Bloomington," Weiler explains. "The homes we have built are in close proximity to downtown, which increases the potential transportation options for our families. The last two homes we have built are in the Trail View neighborhood on the B-Line Trail, just a few minutes' walk from Rogers Street." For more information, visit bailey-weiler.com.

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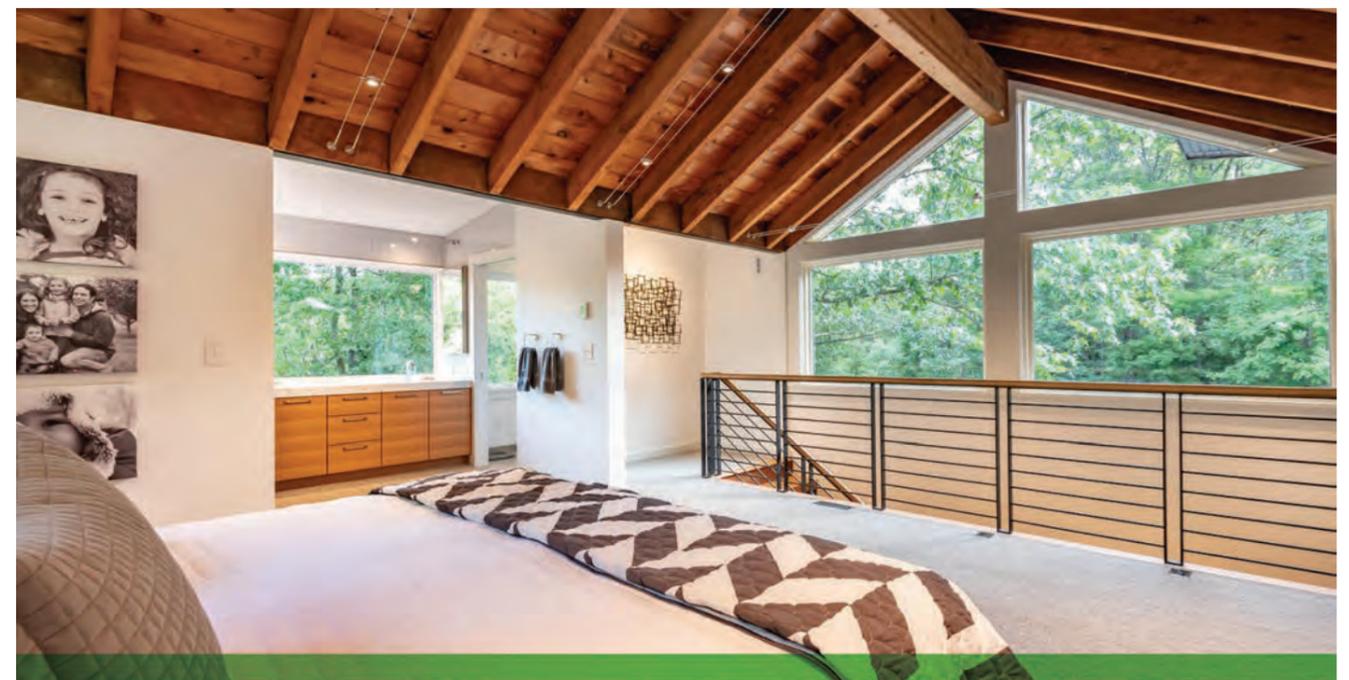
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Homebuyers Need Realtors

Kristi Gibbs with Century 21 Scheetz says homebuyers need Realtors. "Today's buyers are facing challenges in our market, not only because our average sale price continues to rise, but the number of listings year-to-date is less—there is competition for homes, especially in specific price ranges," she says. "The seller pays the commission, so there's no reason a buyer shouldn't have a Realtor. My advice, follow-through, and networking are key for my buyers."

Because Realtors are the first to know about potential listings, buyers who are represented by agents have an advantage, Gibbs says. "We can often get them in to see homes before they go on the market, and buyers can make an offer and have the home under contract before it's listed, which has benefits for both buyers and sellers," she explains, adding that buyers may need to see houses as soon as they become available, even if it isn't convenient.

When choosing a Realtor, Gibbs encourages buyers to interview agents and choose someone who will communicate with them and other Realtors alike. "You want to make sure your Realtor works well with others and has a great network," Gibbs says. She also advises sellers that just because the market leans in their favor doesn't mean they'll get a quick sale for more money. "I have great marketing for my listings, but my sellers know they can't do nothing then expect a quick sale for the most money." For more information, call 812-606-9790 or email kgibbs@c21scheetz.com.

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Designing and Installing Affordable Solar

David Mann, who has operated Mann Plumbing Inc. since 1992, saw potential in the solar market when he started designing and installing radiant floor heating. "The move to solar hot water design began as a complement to the radiant floor heating business, since these two technologies work so well together," Mann says. In early 2008, he established MPI Solar with the intention of designing and installing systems for residential and commercial customers.

That ended up being a wise move as the economy took a downturn in 2008. "Within months of our marketing of solar thermal systems, we began to take phone calls from folks seeking information and help with solar PV [photovoltaic] systems," he explains. "We were asked to design and build solar hot water systems for homes and businesses, schools, apartment buildings, two Indiana prisons, and breweries."

Mann says the solar hot water business has slowed down, but solar PV for electricity generation is keeping his company busy. MPI Solar works with systems of varying sizes, from hundreds of solar panels to small residential systems with only a few panels. "Most systems are rooftop installations, but we build many types of ground-mount systems, including dual axis trackers, which follow the sun through the day and the seasons," Mann says. "We have designed and built complete off-grid systems for small homes and also water pumping for cattle operations, and we are preparing for installation of a large solar system for a new school and a system on the pavilion at the new Switchyard Park."



Mann says solar is becoming more affordable, with prices at near-record lows right now, but that could change with tariffs. However, consumers can still get a 30% federal tax credit this year. "After the end of the year, the tax credit will decrease to 26% and the following year to 22%," he explains. "If someone is thinking about a solar installation and they are supplied by Duke Energy, they are still eligible for full net metering for more than a decade before that is phased out."

Mann believes MPI Solar's experience in the industry, excellent warranties, and strong intention to please customers helps it stand out among providers. "We understand customer service and know what it takes to make customers happy," he adds. For more information, visit mpisolar.com.

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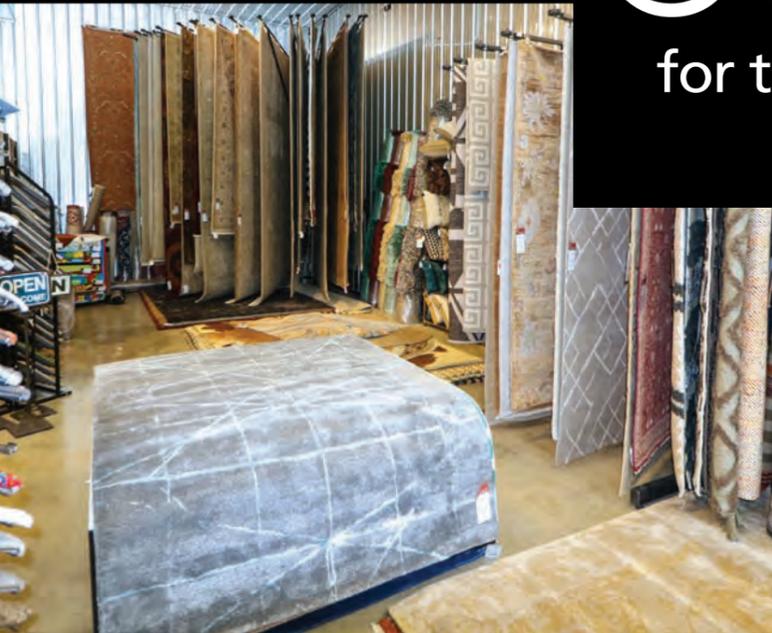
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Solar Saving Money

As an engineering student at Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology, Whole Sun Designs Inc. owner Ryan Zaricki vowed never to build bombs or widgets. After graduating, he moved to Colorado and instead worked with natural building and renewable energy systems, and eventually transitioned to installing solar panels.

Zaricki moved back to Indiana in 2008 and received an email asking his advice on solar installation bids. After answering their questions, Zaricki was asked if he wanted to bid on the project. "I did and was able to land that first project," he says. "One happy customer led to other happy customers, and since 2011 we have installed over 300 systems in southern Indiana. We've really focused on empowering businesses and homeowners to reap the benefits of solar."

In 2017, Zaricki moved his business from Evansville to Bloomington to better focus on his partnership with the City of Bloomington and the Solar Indiana Renewable Energy Network (SIREN) through the Solarize Bloomington Initiative. This is his fourth year. "I knew if we were going to be successful in solar in Indiana, we needed to be in Bloomington," he says. "We want to help as many people as possible go solar." Zaricki adds that now is a good time to install solar systems because the federal tax credit for doing so begins stepping down next year. "I got into this business because I'm a tree-hugger, but we stayed in this business and became successful because solar saves homeowners money." For more information, email info@wholesundesign.com.

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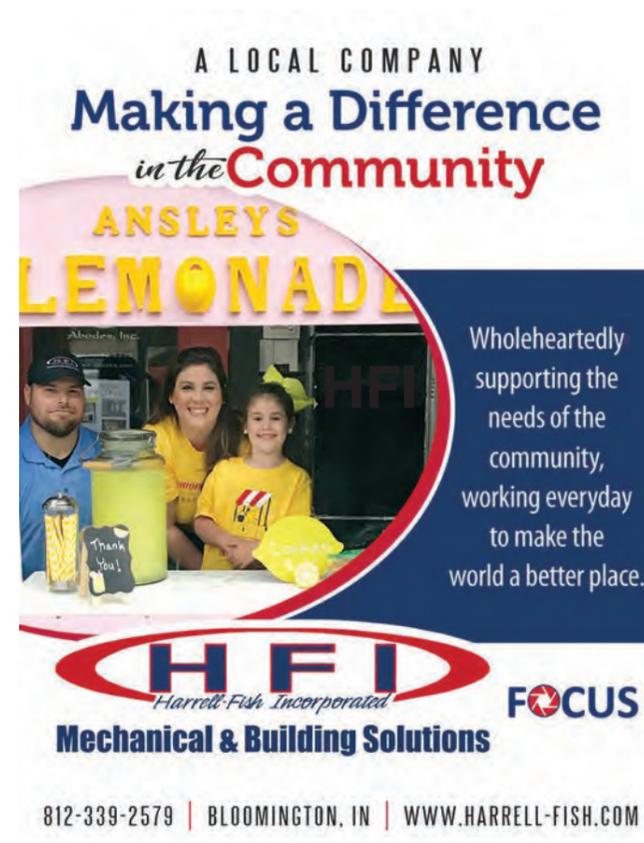
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In fact, Dawson and his wife, Ashley, are also two of HFI's satisfied customers. Their house on Lake Lemon—located 10 miles northeast of Bloomington—recently underwent a complete renovation. HFI crews upgraded the heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems and the plumbing, which included replacing traditional water heaters with two tankless units. These renovations are only a sampling of what HFI offers. Other installations and services include furnace, air conditioner, heat pumps, geothermal systems, solar panels, duct cleaning and work, exhaust and ventilation, and air filtration.

Once systems are in place, HFI offers planned maintenance programs with a menu of options that are customized to each customer's system. "No system will sustain peak performance without periodic monitoring and service," Dawson says. "We will do whatever it takes as one team to make a difference by being leaders in mechanical and building solutions." For more information, visit harrell-fish.com.

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The Loren Wood Builders team. Photo by Martin Boling

A Strong Team for a Positive Client Experience

Loren Wood began Loren Wood Builders 10 years ago because he loved to build things. But as the first decade unfolded, Wood built something he didn't anticipate—a strong team of more than 40 highly skilled carpenters, project managers, designers, electricians, painters, and support staff. "I started this business because I just wanted to do a nice job, build nice stuff," Wood says. "We've built a team of really talented craftspeople who genuinely care about the quality of their work. It's been a journey of building nice things and raising the standard of quality continuously."

While Loren Wood Builders has always had a strong core group of carpenters, Wood recognized the busy construction market had clients waiting in line for six months just to get a design. So a year ago, he added an architect element that could complement what was being offered locally to help meet his clients' needs. And when local painters became too busy to take on new work, Wood added painters to his team.

"We really didn't see that as a change of direction, but rather as a way of trying to do a better job of meeting the clients' needs," Wood says. "As construction got busier in Bloomington, people had to wait. We wanted to complement the work already being done by others in the community, because everyone is so busy."

Wood built his team by implementing guiding principles that help measure and determine annual goals. The first is paying attention to every detail. "That applies to everything from the sales and design and pricing process to execution of the finished work and project," Wood says, adding that another is maintaining a positive work environment. "We focus on that all the time. It's conducive to skill development and inclusion."

The whole team is dedicated to a highly positive client experience. "That's how we measure our success at the end of a project," he says. "You can get the product right, but it's hard to gauge the client experience. We don't want it to just be an awesome house.

We want the client to feel good about the whole process."

The final two guiding principles are a commitment to investing in the community and to preserving the environment. While about 75% to 80% of the company's work is large residential renovations, investing in the community has led to community-forward commercial projects like the Beanblossom Bottoms boardwalk, the Lotus Education & Arts Foundation headquarters, and the Hoosier Heights Bloomington climbing gym. "We're still very much a residential outfit, but we're complementing that with more community-centric commercial projects," Wood says.

The company is also working on Bloomington Cohousing, an intentional community of private homes clustered around shared space. "The purpose is to provide an opportunity to know your neighbors and live in a more connected community environment," Wood explains. Learn more at lorenwood-builders.com and bloomingtoncohousing.org.

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