

# HOMES



This stunning colonial revival in Beverly is proudly presented by Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage.

*Please see Page 10 for details and additional photos.*



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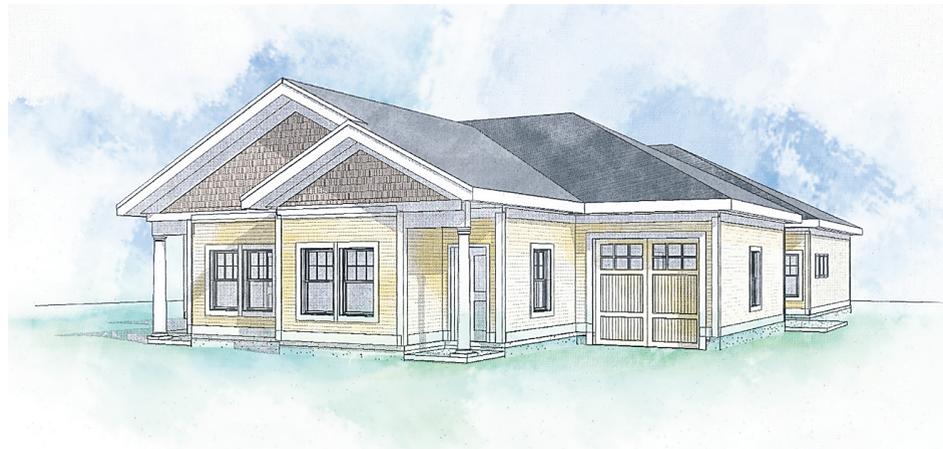
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# HOMES

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SPRING 2016

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## To our readers

The advent of spring brings with it longer days, warmer weather and the always-anticipated rebirth of the real estate market.

Ask any local agent and you are bound to hear that the climate in all of our beautiful North Shore communities is more active than ever.

So, as you peruse all of the lovely properties featured in this issue of "HOMES," I hope you will take the time to enjoy the "ride" as we take you from city to seashore.

Thank you, as always, for reading.



Lillian Shapiro

LILLIAN SHAPIRO

Director of Real Estate Advertising

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# Tips from the pros: Realtors share their secrets



BY STACI GIORDULLO  
ANGIE'S LIST (TNS)

Working with a knowledgeable Realtor when buying or selling a house will not only expedite the process, but it can save you money.

If you have plans to move in the near future, heed this advice from agents for your best chance of success in real estate.

#### HIRE LOCAL

Every metropolitan area has a few real estate agents that spend a lot of money marketing himself or herself to everyone within shouting distance. But if you know what part of town you want to live in, hire an agent who specializes in that locale.

Perhaps he or she even lives in the area and can tell you where to find the nearest dog park or the best barbecue joint. You want to work with someone who knows practically every nook and cranny of your

desired location.

#### CATCH MORE FLIES WITH HONEY

The real estate industry is unique in that competitors have to work with one another on a regular basis. If you interview a few prospective Realtors, one of those you don't hire may end up bringing a buyer to the table.

The point is, be nice. Don't bad mouth someone who may have rubbed you the wrong way because you could end up trying to complete a sale together.

#### GET OUT OF THE HOUSE

When it's time for an open house or a showing, take your pets and disappear. Your presence can make potential buyers feel uneasy, and as a result, they may leave and never return.

#### BE REALISTIC

It may be a bit tongue-in-cheek, but the secret to a successful search may be inside

you. Home buyers tend to insist on a very specific list of demands or dream beyond the budget. When in the end, what they end up buying looks nothing like their initial demands.

Take some time to really review what it is you want and a realistic budget so you won't waste your time chasing after something that's out of your reach.

#### ASK QUESTIONS

A Realtor should be an open book when it comes to showing you a house. Yes, you're given a lot of information regarding a home's size and tax requirements and so on, but don't be afraid to ask questions outside of the box.

Was there ever a crime or reports of paranormal activity on the property? What agents are required to reveal varies depending on where you live, but regardless, do a little digging on your own (talk to the neighbors!) before you buy.

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# SEASONAL SPRUCE-UP

## Get your yard ready for summer

### FAMILY FEATURES

Although you may be itching to get back outside, before you can relax, there's work to do. After enduring the wear and tear of fall and winter, most yards need attention to get back into summer shape.

These tips from the experts at Sun Joe will help you clean up your entire yard in time for summer so there's more time to enjoy the great outdoors:

**GARDEN:** Prepare your planting bed by using a tiller before seeding. Loosening up existing soil helps water and nutrients reach your new plants' roots. Better yet, add some manure before tilling to create a healthy growing environment.

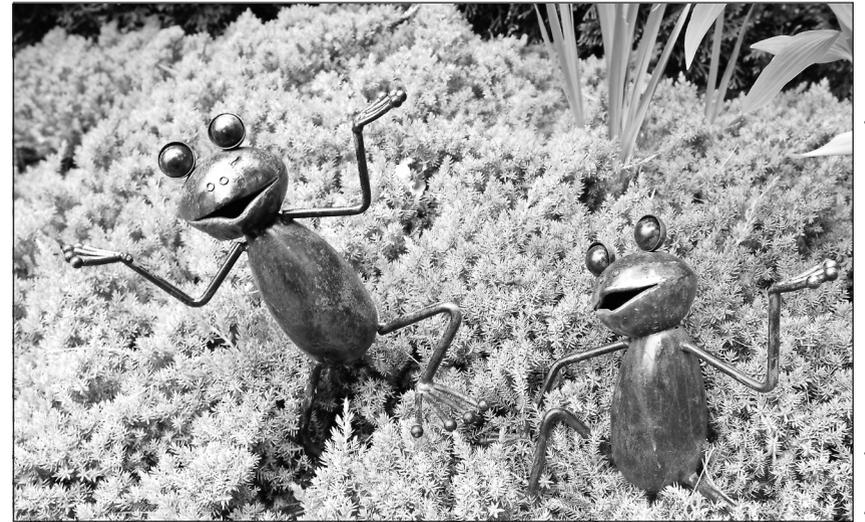
**TREES:** Spring and summer are all about new life and dead tree limbs hanging around your home can kill the mood. Portable pole chain saws can help trim away the dead limbs.

**MULCH:** Use the mild weather of spring before it gets too hot to lay down or freshen up the mulch around your plants. A thin (2 to 3 inches deep) layer of mulch around your landscape will help keep roots cool in the upcoming summer months and warm when cooler weather inevitably returns again.

**GRASS:** When your grass is recovering from the long winter, you should wait until your soil dries out before starting work on your lawn because being too eager and working on soggy soil

can harm already tender new grass roots. Once your grass is alive and growing, mow only when you need to — grass is at its healthiest if you cut no more than a third of the blade. Get your timing right and your neighbors will notice that the grass is always greener on your side.

**DRIVEWAY/PATIO:** Over the winter months, mildew, grime, dirt and stains have grown in your outdoor spaces, reduced curb appeal and destroyed your yard. Pressure washers can make your spaces look brand new, delivering thousands of pounds of water pressure to demolish every square inch of dirt from your driveway, your patio, your sidewalk and even your home's siding.



FILE PHOTO

There's plenty to do to get your yard in tip-top shape for summer. But with a few key steps, everyone will soon be doing their happy dance for a season of fun.



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# Norwood Pond home offers tranquility, convenience in Beverly

By NANCY MADES-BYRD  
 CORRESPONDENT

Every day will feel like a vacation in this three-bedroom home idyllically seated directly on Norwood Pond in Beverly.

Situated down a long, semi-private drive, this property makes you feel as though you're miles away from the hustle and bustle — even though you're really less than a mile from the North Beverly train station.

“The combination of a spring-fed lake and wild conservation land is stunning in every season,” observes the current homeowner. “The vistas we see from our living room and deck tend to stop first-time visitors in their tracks.”

Constructed in 1965, the eight-room home is a classic raised ranch. When you enter the front door, a handful of steps bring you up to the beautiful living room with hardwood floors, a fireplace and a bank of windows with a glass door leading outside to the deck with stunning views of the pond that runs nearly the length of the house.

The kitchen boasts a large, granite countertop and quality stainless-steel appliances. The oversized counter was designed to include a breakfast bar. The dining area is adjacent to the kitchen and a home office, with pond views also convenient to this space.

The outdoor deck overlooking the pond is accessible via the living room and dining room doors.

“During the warm weather, the deck becomes almost another room,” says listing agent Peter Dorsey of Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage of Beverly. “It’s a very tranquil setting, a lot

## AT A GLANCE

- Raised ranch located directly on Beverly’s Norwood Pond
- 2,700 square feet
- 3 bedrooms
- 2.5 baths
- \$675,000

### LISTED BY

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Peter Dorsey

like having your own private sanctuary.

“The land on the other side of the pond is owned by the City of Beverly, and was recently put into conservation by an Essex County Greenbelt conservation restriction. That means it can never be built on and will remain woods.”

The bedrooms and two full baths are also on this level with two family bedrooms on the land-facing side of the home and the master bedroom with private bath on the side facing the pond.

“The lower level has 8-foot ceilings, so you don’t feel like you’re in a basement,” remarks Dorsey. This level brings the family room with another fireplace, a half bath, and the laundry, which is a large room that is also used for storage. The two-car garage, which can be heated, is also located on this level. There is paved parking for additional vehicles.

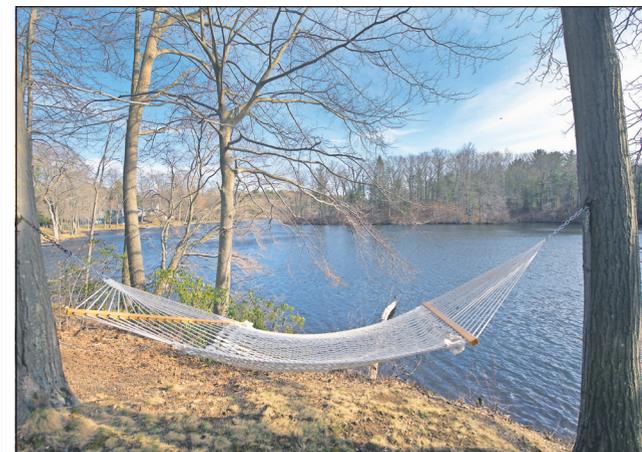
Outside, there is a small dock ideal for launching a



This eight-room, three-bedroom raised ranch is ideally sited on a semi-private drive on Norwood Pond.



The lower level is gorgeous with its 8-foot ceilings, hardwood flooring, a fireplace and French doors leading out to the pond.



In addition to the spectacular views, there is a small dock from which to launch your canoe or kayak onto Norwood Pond.

canoe, kayak or stand-up paddleboard to enjoy the offerings of Norwood Pond.

“We’ve been lucky enough to see these views for 30 years and it never gets old,” says the homeowner. “This nature. It’s hard to believe is a truly special place for those who enjoy unspoiled nature. The property is a treasure.”

# Beverly Victorian is both a timeless, yet modern delight

BY NANCY MADES-BYRD  
CORRESPONDENT

Situated on a desirable corner lot just steps from Dane Street Beach, this classic folk Victorian welcomes you with elegant warmth.

Built in 1890, the 11-room home is at once a spacious example of an era when grand homes had passageways to allow the butler to move inconspicuously from his pantry to the kitchen, yet updated to be a modern space equipped for the 21st century.

Even before you step foot inside the home, the white picket fence and large porch signal that a place of comfort and graciousness awaits.

“When you walk in, you have this homey feeling; it’s very spacious and yet it feels cozy,” says listing agent Janice Fisher of Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage of Beverly. “It’s an inviting, special home – perfect for entertaining, but also just right for spending quiet time at home.”

Entering the inviting foyer, the Victorian twin parlors to the left and right – both with pocket doors – have been transformed today into a stunning living room with wood-burning fireplace and a friendly family room.

The dining room is to the left of the lovely staircase and leads to the decidedly modern kitchen.

“When the kitchen was remodeled it was designed around the original magnificent slate sink,” observes Fisher. “The counters are granite, and there is expansive cabinetry for storage. The center island is wonderful.”

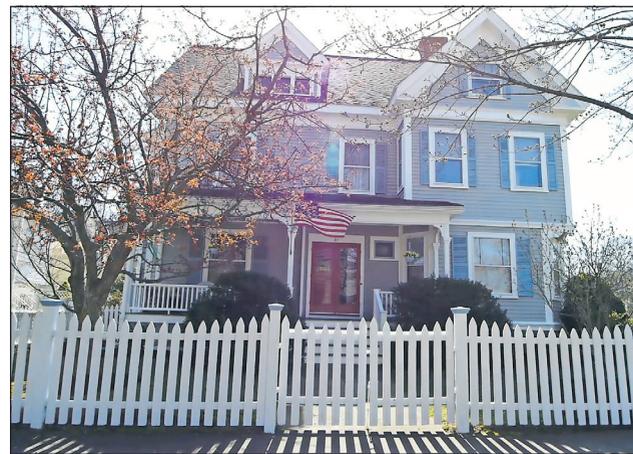
The lovingly maintained, built-in china cabinet in the dining room and the original crown molding are just two



The kitchen has been remodeled to include a remarkable slate sink, granite counters, generous cabinetry and a center island.



Period details are ever-present in the dining room, where you will find crown molding, chair rails and a built-in china cabinet.



This classic folk Victorian built around the turn of the century boasts every amenity for today’s more contemporary lifestyle.

examples of the care that was taken to maintain the home’s outstanding Victorian workmanship.

French doors in the dining room lead to a fabulous sun porch. Sun porches became a standard feature in Victorian

construction as residents sought to cultivate citrus fruits such as lemons that became wildly popular status

symbols. Today, the sunroom is an ideal space to relax with the latest best-seller. A full bath completes the first floor.

The home is also an easy walk to the popular shops, restaurants and attractions of downtown Beverly, as well as the Beverly commuter rail station.

## AT A GLANCE

- 3,119 square feet
- 11 rooms
- 9,342-square-foot lot
- Updated Victorian steps from Dane Street Beach
- \$749,000
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Janice Fisher

On the second level, there are four good-size bedrooms and an additional full bathroom. Two more bedrooms and a full bath are located on the home’s third floor. The laundry is located in the unfinished basement.

The meticulously maintained grounds feature a level yard with mature, ornamental trees. The striking patio, covered with grapevines, is ideal for outdoor activities and dining.

“The yard is beautifully landscaped with raised garden beds – perfect for the veteran or new gardener,” says Fisher.

There is a separate, two-car garage, plus paved parking for four additional vehicles.

The residence is heated by natural gas and cooled by the nearby ocean breezes. “If you walk to the end of the driveway and look up the street, there’s the ocean,” says Fisher. “It’s that close to the beach.”

# Magnificent Beverly home brings stunning ocean views

By NANCY MADES-BYRD  
CORRESPONDENT

With striking ocean views from nearly every room, the circa 1905-built “Taormina” represents all of the elegance and grace one expects from a majestic residence.

The colonial revival home is prominently seated between Dane Street Beach and Lyons Park.

Its welcoming vestibule with beautiful leaded windows opens to the central foyer where visitors from a bygone era would leave their calling cards on the entry table.

To the right of the foyer, a bright, sunny living room and music room are divided by a fireplace with an Inglenook – a cozy seating area. French doors lead to a curved bay with stunning window seats offering breathtaking ocean views.

Opposite these rooms are the library and the formal dining room. The library’s handsome, wood-burning fireplace with its glazed tile front and mahogany mantle is the focal point of this gorgeous space, with its wood paneling and built-in bookcases believed to be original construction. The dining room brings the fine craftsmanship of beamed ceilings and built-in china cabinets.

The kitchen is designed for the home chef, with endless cabinets and granite counters as well as top-quality appliances. The oversized central island is perfect for after-school snacks or cocktail party appetizers. The laundry room is adjacent to the kitchen and breakfast room and, like the rest of the main-level rooms, boasts gleaming hardwood floors.

All of these rooms bring you to the plentiful deck that is large enough for dining al

## AT A GLANCE

- 5,859 square feet of living space
- 5 bedrooms
- 4 baths
- Ocean-front colonial revival with custom details and modern amenities
- \$2.15 million

### LISTED BY

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- Farrell@BostonNorthRealEstate.com
- <http://bostonnorthrealestate.com/63-lothrop-street-beverly-ma>



John and Cindy Farrell

fresco and lounging in deck chairs. The living room, dining room, breakfast room and foyer all open to the large, four-season sunroom as well.

On the second level, a large hallway directs you to five bedrooms and three full baths. The master suite showcases expansive ocean views with French doors to a private balcony, and also features a dressing room, two walk-in closets, and an extensive, four-piece bath.

Once meant to allow servants to travel quickly and unseen by family and guests, the back stairway today is a convenient shortcut from the second floor to the kitchen.

The spacious third floor is a fantastic bonus room easily imagined as a family or hobby room. It brings ocean views on all sides, hardwood floors and a half bath.

Situated on more than a half acre, the grounds are terraced down toward the water, allowing for a lovely upper-level yard and an easy



This exceptionally grand manse features stunning period details that include leaded windows, built-in china cabinets and exquisite woodworking throughout.



The elegant second floor offers five bedrooms, including a master suite with two walk-in closets, a dressing room, an extensive bath and French doors opening to a private balcony that looks out onto the ocean.



The sunroom with tiled flooring, walls of glass and access to a deck affords the most unbelievable water views.

walk down the steps to the lower level.

It’s important to remember that while the house looks like it belongs on the set of “Downton Abbey,” it has been updated to the demands of modern living. Features like central air conditioning, an in-ground sprinkler

system and recessed lighting happily coexist alongside custom-period woodwork and Pairpoint glass doorknobs.

There is paved parking in addition to the two-car garage. The property is also convenient to Beverly’s popular restaurants and shops, as well as the commuter rail

station.

The home’s eye-catching stucco exterior is a clue to how Taormina may have come by its lovely Italian name. Stucco home exteriors have been popular in Italy for hundreds of years. In addition to being an outstanding home, Taormina is also the name of a beautiful hilltop

town on the east coast of Sicily. Located near Mount Etna, Taormina is famous for the Teatro Antico – an ancient, Greco-Roman theater that is still in use today.

Visit <http://bostonnorthrealestate.com/63-lothrop-street-beverly-ma> to learn more about this special home.



The chef's kitchen is appointed with generous cherry cabinets, granite countertops and top-of-the-line, stainless-steel appliances.



With a thoughtful open floor plan, this home is well-suited for entertaining.

# Contemporary Danvers colonial boasts perfect open floor plan

NANCY MADES-BYRD  
CORRESPONDENT

The first impression one gets when entering this impressive Danvers colonial is that one has just entered a museum of contemporary art that somehow doubles as a warm, welcoming home.

"All the natural light streams through," says listing agent Pam Spiros of Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage of Beverly. "The home just abounds with light from the moment you walk in the front door."

Where some modern design merely tips its hat to open-concept floor plans, this special home fully embraces the idea of a home where there are no walls to divide the common spaces. The result is an aesthetically pleasing space with great traffic flow and a sense of openness.

From the front foyer you

## AT A GLANCE

- 10 rooms
- 3,670 square feet
- 4 bedrooms
- 4 1/2 baths
- Home gym
- Backyard stretches out to conservation land
- \$864,000

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Pam Spiros

can see straight through to the back of the house, observes Spiros. The first level features a fireplaced family room, a dining room sized for entertaining, formal living room, office, sunroom,

and a phenomenal chef's kitchen.

The kitchen is a cook's dream. There is endless storage in rich, custom cherry cabinets, granite counters, top-line stainless appliances, and a wonderful center island. The center island is the kind of spot where you can serve afternoon snacks during the day and set up a cocktail party buffet later for the grownups.

The laundry and a half-bath complete the first level.

Upstairs, the second level brings four generous bedrooms and three baths. The master suite is an ideal retreat and features a private sitting area and spa-like bath with double vanity sinks, a Jacuzzi tub and separate shower.

The lower level of the home finds more expansive spaces, including the media room and home gym.

"It's a real home gym



Highlights of this stately contemporary colonial include a two-car garage, a finished lower level complete with a media room and home gym, and a meticulously landscaped yard with stone patio.

complete with mirror and rubber-padded floors," says Spiros. "It's a custom-built home. Every attention to detail was paid and is evident at every turn."

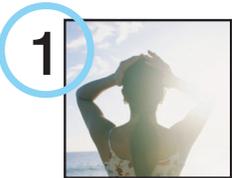
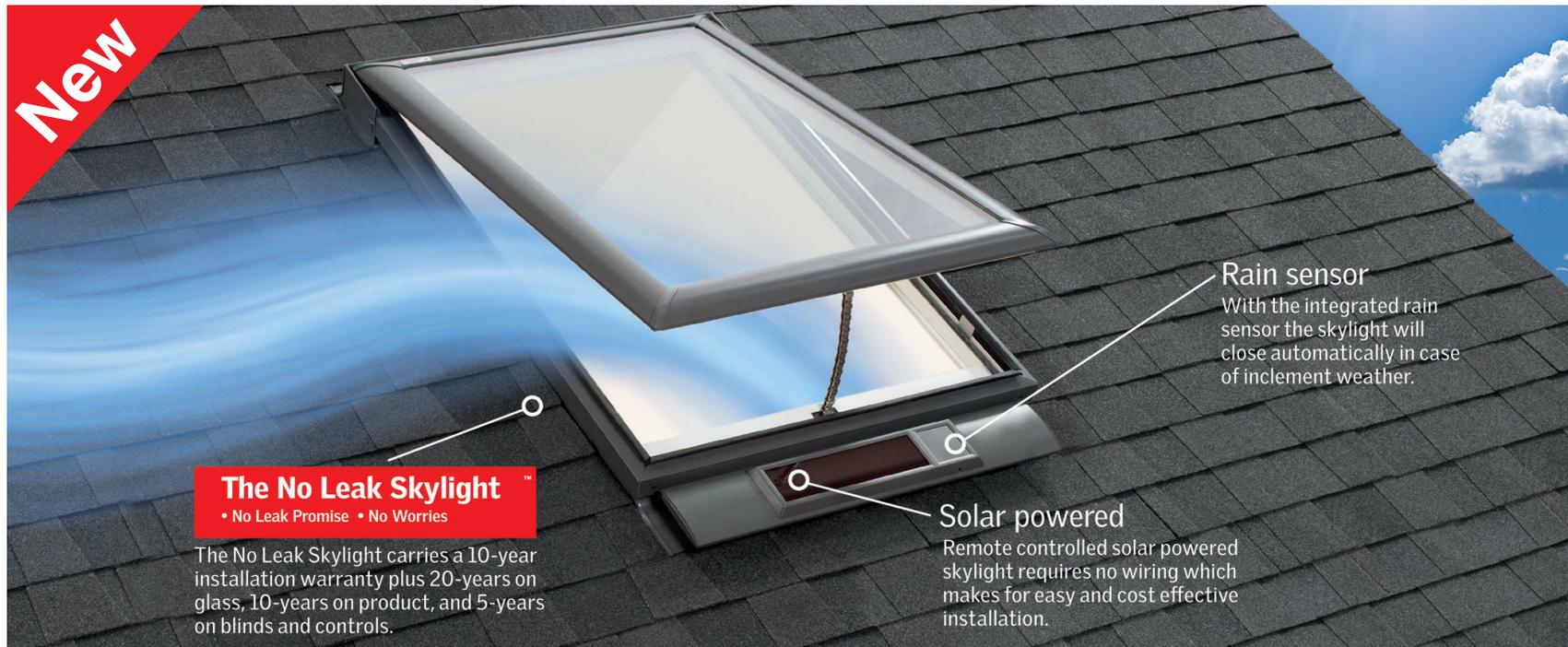
The media room has

sliders leading out to the gorgeous landscaped yard and stone patio perfect for warm-weather entertaining. The property overlooks lush fields and backs up to conservation land — allowing for a

serene sense of privacy.

There is an attached, two-car garage, plus paved parking for additional vehicles. The home is heated by forced air and cooled by central air conditioning.

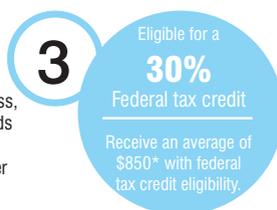
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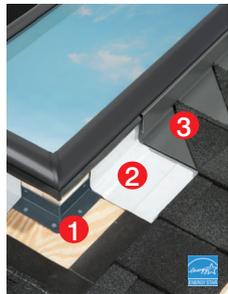


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## 1st Quarter 2016

<p><b>Single-Family</b></p>  <p><b>SOLD</b></p> <p>10 Bentley Street Salem</p>	<p><b>Single-Family</b></p>  <p><b>SOLD</b></p> <p>6 Munsey Lane Gloucester</p>	<p><b>Single-Family</b></p>  <p><b>SOLD</b></p> <p>14 Oakland Salem</p>	<p><b>Single-Family</b></p>  <p><b>SOLD</b></p> <p>11 Planters Neck Salem</p>	<p><b>Single-Family</b></p>  <p><b>SOLD</b></p> <p>12 Broad Street Salem</p>	<p><b>Single-Family</b></p>  <p><b>SOLD</b></p> <p>9 Planters Street Salem</p>
<p><b>Single-Family</b></p>  <p><b>SOLD</b></p> <p>13 Planters Street Salem</p>	<p><b>Single-Family</b></p>  <p><b>SOLD</b></p> <p>17 Valley Street Salem</p>	<p><b>Single-Family</b></p>  <p><b>SOLD</b></p> <p>19 Nursery Street Salem</p>	<p><b>Single-Family</b></p>  <p><b>SOLD</b></p> <p>32 Osborne Hill Drive Salem</p>	<p><b>Single-Family</b></p>  <p><b>SOLD</b></p> <p>2 Salt Wall Lane Salem</p>	<p><b>Single-Family</b></p>  <p><b>SOLD</b></p> <p>23 Nason Road Swampscott</p>
<p><b>Single-Family</b></p>  <p><b>SOLD</b></p> <p>12 Chestnut Street Salem</p>	<p><b>Single-Family</b></p>  <p><b>SOLD</b></p> <p>123 Federal Street Salem</p>	<p><b>Condominium</b></p>  <p><b>SOLD</b></p> <p>35 Flint Street U:106 Salem</p>	<p><b>Condominium</b></p>  <p><b>SOLD</b></p> <p>6 Essex Street U:A Salem</p>	<p><b>Condominium</b></p>  <p><b>SOLD</b></p> <p>24 Forrester Street U:1 Salem</p>	<p><b>Condominium</b></p>  <p><b>SOLD</b></p> <p>11 Church Street U:705 Salem</p>
<p><b>Condominium</b></p>  <p><b>SOLD</b></p> <p>64 Essex Street U:2 Salem</p>	<p><b>Condominium</b></p>  <p><b>SOLD</b></p> <p>5 Bradford Street U:1 Salem</p>	<p><b>Condominium</b></p>  <p><b>SOLD</b></p> <p>60 Dodge Street U:10 Beverly</p>	<p><b>Condominium</b></p>  <p><b>SOLD</b></p> <p>10 Andrew Street U:3A Salem</p>	<p><b>Condominium</b></p>  <p><b>SOLD</b></p> <p>23 Beach Avenue U:3 Salem</p>	<p><b>Condominium</b></p>  <p><b>SOLD</b></p> <p>95 Federal Street U:1 Salem</p>
<p><b>Multi-Family</b></p>  <p><b>SOLD</b></p> <p>5 Roslyn Street Salem</p>	<p><b>Multi-Family</b></p>  <p><b>SOLD</b></p> <p>59 Broad Street Salem</p>	<p><b>Multi-Family</b></p>  <p><b>SOLD</b></p> <p>1-1A Wisteria Salem</p>	<p><b>Multi-Family</b></p>  <p><b>SOLD</b></p> <p>7 Howard Street Salem</p>	<p><b>AGENTS OF THE MONTH</b></p>	
				 <p>Kristen Kotowski</p>	 <p>Maggie Gibson</p>

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# Step-by-step guide for first-time homebuyers

By ALAINA TWEDDALE  
GOBANKINGRATES.COM (TNS)

Here's a secret for first-time homebuyers: No two homebuying experiences are the same. Even with a Zillow sneak peek, a shopper never really knows what homes will look like until they see them in person or what snags they'll encounter once mortgage lenders and home inspectors get involved.

For some people, it's the unpredictability of the experience that makes it most exciting. Others prefer to go in armed with as much knowledge as possible. If you fall in the second camp, and you've been eyeing open houses, this guide can help you prepare for your first time buying a house.

## CHECK YOUR CREDIT

Even the most meticulous bill payers can be surprised to find dings on their credit reports. Bills get sent to old addresses, and creditors sometimes make mistakes. You might find someone else's credit mistakes commingled with your history if that person has the same name or a name similar to yours. Worse yet, you might unwittingly be the victim of credit fraud or identity theft.

"Make sure you don't encounter any surprises when you're applying for loans," said financial planner Katie Brewer. She suggested pulling your credit reports from AnnualCreditReport.com or directly from each of the three major credit bureaus — Equifax, TransUnion and Experian — to check for errors or other problems.

"Improving your credit score, even by just a few points, can help you get better financing terms when shopping for a mortgage," said Ross Anthony, a real



estate agent. "Interest rates, points and even city-funded first-time homebuyer assistance programs can all be influenced by your credit rating."

To improve your credit score:

- Contact each of the three credit bureaus and report any errors.

- Pay down your credit card debt.

- Pay off any small balances.

- Make sure to pay all of your bills on time.

Your lender might have more ideas and options for enhancing your credit score, said Anthony. "Give yourself at least six months to see results," he said.

## FIND A LENDER

Most buyers spend several months working closely with their chosen lender. You want to make sure you've picked someone who understands your financial vision and won't push products that aren't in your best interest.

"Many unprepared homebuyers wait until they find their perfect home before

seriously sitting down with someone to work through the numbers," said Anthony. This can be a huge financial mistake. If you haven't lined up a lender, and you find the home of your dreams, you might feel rushed into picking a mortgage provider."

Added Matt Oliver, a senior loan consultant, "You can pick one person to do the prequalification and then shop rates and fees when you get a purchase contract."

It might require a couple of extra steps, but it's the best way, he added.

Anthony suggested interviewing at least three lenders and getting a prequalification or even preapproval, which holds more weight, before starting your home search. "The more you've done upfront, the stronger your offer will be when you get to the negotiating table," he said.

To get preapproved, you'll need at least the following:

- Bank statements for the two most recent months.

- Verification for your down-payment source.

- Tax returns from the last

two years.

- A copy of your driver's license and Social Security card.

## SET YOUR HOMEBUYING BUDGET

"Most folks underestimate how much their costs will be until they meet with me," said mortgage adviser Casey Fleming and author of "The Loan Guide: How to Get the Best Possible Mortgage." Think about how much cash you have to pay the upfront costs, which will include your down payment and closing costs, as well as what you can afford to fork over each month in mortgage, tax and insurance payments.

"All of your fixed expenses — including the mortgage, student loans, car loans, utilities, cellphone, day care, subscriptions and any other fixed expenses — should be no more than 50 percent of your take-home pay," said Brewer. "The mortgage company only looks at your income and your loan payments, and not at the rest of your expenses, to determine

how much they will lend to you."

In other words, it's up to you, not your lender, to figure out how much mortgage you can comfortably afford.

## MAKE A LIST OF YOUR MUST-HAVES

Decide ahead of time what your ideal house includes, what your deal breakers are and where you're willing to compromise. "At the risk of sounding pessimistic, it is highly unlikely you will find the perfect home with every feature you want in your ideal price range," said Anthony. "It just doesn't happen very often. There will be compromises."

Anthony suggested each spouse or partner rank his or her top five needs, along with the reasons for each. "If you can establish the 'why,' you'll find it's often more important than the 'what,'" he said.

When emotions run high during the home search, as they inevitably do, a prepared list can provide added clarity to your decision-making process.

## FIND A REAL ESTATE AGENT

When searching for a real estate agent, consider the agent's industry expertise, of course, but also how willing he seems to jump in and help you when things get messy. First-time — and sometimes second- or third-time — homebuyers can get emotional and make mistakes, some of which can fracture a deal or cost a lot of money to correct.

"Realtors are usually compensated (by) the seller of a property," said Brewer. Make sure you're working with someone who can see past the compensation structure and keep your needs at the forefront of the home search.

Brewer suggested that homebuyers interview

several real estate agents. Don't settle until you find the one who's a good fit for you.

## PREPARE FOR UPS AND DOWNS

Home shopping online can be a blast. The reality of pounding the pavement in search of the perfect house can sometimes be a drag.

"You might not get the first house that you put an offer on," said Brewer. "You might fall in love with a house online but find out that it doesn't look as great in person."

Even after a contract has been signed, there can be problems closing the sale. Your home inspector might find mold in the basement. The home might not appraise for the expected value. Your name could be spelled wrong on the title documents.

All of these glitches could delay your settlement date or even cause your deal to fall through. Get excited about buying your first home, but always remember that it's not a done deal until you've been handed your new keys at the closing table.

## GET READY FOR SETTLEMENT

Settlement is when your new home becomes yours officially. You'll sit down with your title agent or attorney — or possibly both — and sign a mountain of paperwork. Be prepared with a cashier's check for the down payment, said Oliver. "It will need to match the bank name from the statements you provided to your mortgage lender. It can't come from an account that's been undisclosed."

Finally, settlement is when you'll be handed the keys to your new house. It's time to break open a bottle of champagne and celebrate — but probably not in the title agent's office. Do that in the comfort of your new home, instead.

# Hamilton estate ideal home for both horses and their masters

By NANCY MADES-BYRD  
CORRESPONDENT

Twenty acres of manicured lawns and rolling pastures set the bucolic scene as you approach Black Brook Farm via a picturesque, tree-lined drive. This handsome equestrian estate is situated in the heart of Hamilton's horse country.

Built in 2002, the five-bedroom, seven-bath residence features a stunning, open-floor design that results in bright, sunlit rooms ideal for large- or small-scale entertaining as well as daily living in a custom home that evinces the best of country and modern living.

Entering the sprawling Cape Cod-style home, the impressive foyer leads you to the fireplaced living room, dining room and chef's kitchen. A magnificent river-stone fireplace is the centerpiece of the outstanding family room.

The family room opens into the oversized kitchen that boasts top-of-the-line, stainless-steel appliances; custom cabinets, stone/granite counters, a wine chiller, and a fabulous center island. Gorgeous hardwood floors add richness to the living, dining and family rooms as well as the kitchen.

A good-size bedroom with full bath and the master bedroom suite are also located on the first floor. The spa-like master suite offers a private dressing room and luxury bathroom with a relaxing Jacuzzi soaking tub and double vanity. Both bedrooms on the first level have hardwood floors. The laundry, a mudroom and a half bath complete the first floor.

Upstairs features four substantial bedrooms and three additional full baths. The upstairs bedrooms include ample closet space. Two of the bedrooms feature wall-to-wall

## AT A GLANCE

- Premiere Hamilton equestrian estate
- 7,657 square feet
- 5 bedrooms
- 7 baths
- Stables featuring individual run-outs and heated blanket and tack rooms

- Private setting with direct access to riding trails
- \$4.7 million

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Amy Tissera

carpeting and two have hardwood floors.

The home offers fine amenities throughout, including central air conditioning and vacuum, a security system and radiant gas heat. In addition to the heated, three-car garage, there is parking for 20 additional vehicles.

The living space for horses is as thoughtfully, elegantly and functionally designed as the main residence. The impeccable stables showcase every amenity, including a heated blanket room, spectacular heated tack room, huge 13-by-16-foot stalls with large, individual run-outs for each horse, and a beautiful riding arena. There is also an indoor manure room with dump truck and a sprinkler system for fire prevention.

Situated at the end of a private country road, Black Brook Farm affords direct riding access to Hamilton's horse trails as well as the Myopia Hunt Club and Bradley Palmer State Park.



The rustic great room, with a river stone fireplace and walls of windows, has been called jaw-dropping.



This remarkable equestrian estate includes stables with heated blanket and tack rooms, generous stalls and a riding arena.



The gourmet kitchen is every aspiring chef's dream, complete with top-of-the-line appliances, custom cabinets and stone/granite countertops.

# From spare room to **DREAM CLOSET** It's easier than you think



HOME DEPOT/Closet Maid via AP

This Closet Maid system is perfect for quickly converting a spare room into a dramatic walk-in closet. It offers a mix of hanging space, open shelving and closed storage.

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BY MELISSA RAYWORTH  
ASSOCIATED PRESS

Longing for a bigger closet?

Remember that rooms in your home don't have to be used the way they were originally intended. Get creative and convert a small room into the ultimate walk-in closet, says Egypt Sherrod, host of HGTV's "Flipping Virgins" and "Property Virgins."

"Homes built before the '80s just didn't have the room size that today's buyers have become used to, or the walk-in closets we've been trained to expect," she says.

Giving up a room can be a big decision. The trick is doing it on a minimal budget and retaining the flexibility to use the room differently in the future, says Kevin O'Connor, host of PBS' "This Old House."

#### CHOOSING THE SPACE

Ideally, use the bedroom closest to the master bedroom, says Sherrod: "That way you have the option of opening up the wall to go directly in."

Creating a doorway in a wall is relatively minor construction and can easily be undone, experts say.

The simplest way to convert a small room is by lining the walls with clothing racks on wheels and with free-standing wire shelving units. You can customize the space by adding colorful bins and baskets.

Or you can create shelving that expresses your personal style. For a recent "This Old House" episode, O'Connor worked with a homeowner to build closet storage out of black metal pipes with wooden shelves. The industrial look brought a dose of style to the space, and the unit was sturdy.

"The few places they anchor to the wall give you nice rigidity," O'Connor says, but the shelves also are easily removable.

Another DIY project: To fill the center of a room that Sherrod converted to a closet, she brought in two large bureaus of the same height and arranged them



HOME DEPOT/Closet Maid via AP

Closet Maid's organization system offers a built-in appearance, but can be removed to be used elsewhere if needs change.



HOME DEPOT/Home Decorators Collection via AP

One key to converting a spare room into your dream walk-in closet is making good use of the center of the room. This Home Decorators Collection organization system includes a center island that serves as storage, seating and a work surface for folding clothes or organizing outfits.

back-to-back. She had a folded laundry.

sheet of granite cut to cover the tops, creating a work island that combines storage and a flat surface for arranging accessories or stacking

Interior designer Mikel Welch, previously a competitor on "HGTV Design Stars," says another option is bringing in a pretty table for the

center of the room.

"For those who like to lay out their attire to help them choose their outfit for the day, a table would be perfect," he says. And for

changing or trying things on, "having a snazzy upholstered bench or chaise in the space will certainly come in handy."

The finishing touch: Prop

up a framed, full-length mirror on one wall.

"It's sort of a boutique hotel look," O'Connor says, and easy to remove if you repurpose the room.

#### CONSIDER A SYSTEM

For a finished look with no DIY effort, there are many closet systems that offer a mix of hanging space and shelves. Some are free-standing and others are anchored to the walls.

The more permanent systems are made to look like built-ins, Welch says, and "are a great way to maximize the space with a more customized look." He recommends California Closets and Poliform for portable closets and wardrobe units. He also likes the Italian brand Porro Storage: "They put a chic spin on a typical storage unit," he says.

Additional pieces worth considering: "A great planning tool is a valet rod, which is a pullout rod that you can lay out your outfit for the next day on or use for staging for a trip," says Sarah Fishburne, director of trend and design at Home Depot. "I use mine all the time."

If you have enough space, she suggests adding jewelry trays and racks designed for belts and ties: "Some spin, and some you can slide out with plenty of space," she says.

#### BONUSES AND OBSTACLES

A bedroom repurposed as a closet has ventilation and natural light that's lacking in many closets. "For people who care about getting the tie to match the jacket," O'Connor says, "there's nothing better than natural light."

For the best possible lighting, Fishburne suggests adding dimmers to a walk-in closet and choosing light-bulbs carefully (she likes LED daylight bulbs).

One challenge: Closet doors are designed to swing out, but bedroom doors generally swing into the room. So the door to your new walk-in closet will swing in unless you decide to remove it. Adding sliding pocket doors can be expensive, O'Connor says, but they're a nice luxury to finish off your ultimate walk-in closet.

# Charming 3-bedroom home is central to best of Marblehead

By NANCY MADES-BYRD  
CORRESPONDENT

Sunny and welcoming, this multi-level home is ideally located in a desirable Marblehead neighborhood central to schools, parks, the beach and conservation path, as well as the shops and restaurants that make the town a favorite North Shore destination.

With 1,682 square feet of living space in seven rooms, the three-bedroom, 1½-bathroom home was constructed in 1952.

The main living space features an inviting fireplaced living room with lovely picture window, dining room, family room and kitchen. The warm, family room is an ideal space for holiday gatherings or intimate family nights at home. The laundry room is easily accessible from the family room.

There is also a wonderful, three-season sunroom opening onto the large, level yard and garden area. The yard is strikingly punctuated by a single, magnificent oak tree planted by the seller's daughter during their 53 years at the property. It is an ideal space for budding and veteran gardeners as well as for outdoor parties and play space.

All three bedrooms along with the family, living and dining rooms boast hardwood floors. Storage galore exists within the expansive attic and full basement. There is a single-car, attached garage and additional paved parking for two more vehicles.

The home offers electric baseboard heat. Its many upgrades include high-energy-efficient windows. Low maintenance siding adds to the residence's exterior features.



This multi-level home is nestled in a lovely Marblehead neighborhood convenient to schools, parks and the beach.

## AT A GLANCE

- 1,682 square feet on 8,773-square-foot lot
- 3 bedrooms
- 1½ baths
- Level yard
- Single-car garage
- Three-season porch
- \$409,000



Janice Kostopoulos

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A three-season sunroom opens to a large, level yard.



The main living space is thoughtfully open, and includes a living room with fireplace, dining room, family room and kitchen.

# Dramatic oceanfront living in Marblehead

By LILLIAN SHAPIRO  
DIRECTOR OF REAL ESTATE  
ADVERTISING

It's not often that a property like this presents itself for sale in Marblehead. Boasting more than 5,300 square feet of living space, incomparable ocean views, soaring open spaces and a rare private beach, this seaside contemporary has been brought to a whole new level after more than \$2 million in renovations.

Affording sweeping vistas to the Boston skyline from virtually every room, this nearly indescribable property is new to the market and is listed for \$3,999,000.

"This is just a spectacular offering that is very unusual for Marblehead," said listing agent Dick McKinley of Harborside Sotheby's International Realty. "It has one of the longest, if not *the* longest, water frontages in Marblehead, with over 400 feet of water and sand from where you can launch your own jet skis or catamarans right from your own yard.

"We are talking about an entirely different lifestyle with amazing water access."

With decks and patios spanning the entire length of the house, the open-air expanses are so remarkable that one might be tempted to stay outdoors.

However, the interior with its eye-popping amenities is well-matched with the exquisite exterior.

The thoughtfully wide-open floor plan is enhanced by soaring cathedral ceilings, floor-to-ceiling windows and impeccable wood flooring throughout.

The formal living room features a fireplace, multiple French doors, a built-in window seat with Palladian window and a striking mezzanine



The floor plan is thoughtfully open, with soaring cathedral ceilings, floor-to-ceiling windows, and multiple French doors leading to decks and patios.



Along with a rare, private beach and breathtaking views of the Atlantic Ocean, this Marblehead stunner boasts more than 5,300 square feet of luxurious living space.



Views that extend as far as the Boston skyline are enjoyed from every room of this home.

with walls of glass and doors leading to the second-story deck.

A more-secluded office with separate entrance and

French doors offers the perfect spot for a quiet home office or leisurely family room. Just adjacent, a spacious sitting room with full

bath would make for a convenient master or guest suite. Just down the hall, find a gorgeous, climate-controlled wine cellar with stone

flooring, a tasting table and water vistas.

Rounding off this main level is the gourmet kitchen, once the filming site for the

flooring, a tasting table and water vistas.

Rounding off this main level is the gourmet kitchen, once the filming site for the

## AT A GLANCE

- 5 bedrooms
- 6 full baths
- 5,308 square feet
- Direct ocean frontage
- \$3,999,000

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PBS cooking show, "Ciao Italia." This incredible space is enhanced by coffered ceilings, recessed lighting, a marble-topped island, multiple seating areas and a wall of windows.

Upstairs, find four inviting bedrooms, including a grand master bedroom with vast closets, a luxurious bath and great deck access, as well as a spacious guest suite or second master.

While clearly designed with luxury living and entertaining in mind, this home is simultaneously warm and comfortable. Despite having all of the amenities and qualities one would expect from a home of this caliber, it emotes the feel and warmth of a well-appointed beach house, McKinley said.

"Can you imagine yourself living here, in a home that is so outstanding, yet still somewhat casual and relaxed? It is an incredible beachfront existence that is all about a certain lifestyle, something that is actually quite unique to Marblehead," he said.

This notable property is shown by appointment. For additional information or to schedule a private tour, call Dick McKinley at 617-763-0415.

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# Reimagined downtown Salem condo won't last long

By NANCY MADES-BYRD  
CORRESPONDENT

Nestled in the heart of Salem, this stylish condominium residence is just steps away from the best of Salem's shops, restaurants, attractions and vibrant art scene.

The condominium occupies the first level of a notable antique home located between the fashionable Common and Derby Wharf neighborhoods.

The building was constructed in 1800 as a single-family home for Daniel Sage, who had married into the Silsbees, one of 19th-century Salem's first families. It was featured in "Salem Interiors," writer Samuel Chamberlain's seminal 1950 book detailing the finest of Salem's grand homes.

Today the building has been reimagined as condominiums for modern times.

The two-bedroom, first level condominium strikes a perfect balance of old and new. Gleaming, original hardwood floors and dramatic crown moldings coexist in perfect harmony with central air conditioning and a washer/dryer hookup in the kitchen.

"It's a beautiful home with lovely architectural features," says listing agent Sara Maurno of Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage of Salem.

"Every room has glossy hardwood floors, very high ceilings with stunning crown moldings and slightly lower ceiling in the passageway, a common characteristic in antique homes. There are three beautiful, decorative fireplaces with antique carved details that serve as elegant focal points."

The condominium offers premiere single-level living

## AT A GLANCE

- 2-bedroom, 1-bath condominium in downtown Salem
- 991 square feet
- Parking for one vehicle
- Pets allowed
- \$259,000

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Sara Maurno

featuring two bedrooms, living room, kitchen and one generous bath. "It's unusual to find all of the features offered by this condo in a single-level, first-floor unit with so many added features," adds Maurno.

The home's flexible floor plan allows for purposeful design to meet individual needs, says Maurno. The room currently used as the formal dining room could easily be repurposed as a living room, just as the living room could be reimagined as a master bedroom.

The sunny eat-in kitchen features quality countertops and expansive cabinets for storage. A washer/dryer hookup is conveniently located inconspicuously in a kitchen closet.

The kitchen opens to a spacious common deck, perfect for outdoor dining in warm weather, and the property's beautiful backyard. The residence is heated by natural gas and is a pet-friendly building. There is also assigned parking for one vehicle — an amenity not



Located on the first floor of this stately 19th century home is a two-bedroom condominium with a tasteful mix of old and new.



Original hardwood flooring, high ceilings and crown moldings can be found all throughout this home.



This condominium's versatile floor plan affords the opportunity to repurpose any of the spaces to meet the residents' needs.

to be discounted in popular downtown Salem.

"To be able to have one-level living with handsome, antique features, wonderful outdoor living space, and

parking in downtown Salem is really remarkable," says Maurno.

"The home is close to shopping, fine dining, coffee shops, a tea room and

the historic Hawthorne Hotel. Enjoy nature and the social scene on the Common, Pickering Wharf and Collins Cove or lose yourself for an

afternoon at the world-class Peabody Essex Museum. You can even ditch the car and let the commuter rail whisk you into Boston."

# Stately elegance abounds in one of Salem's finest manor homes

By NANCY MADES-BYRD  
CORRESPONDENT

You can own a part of history with this stately brick home proudly situated in the heart of Salem's storied McIntire Historic District.

Built in 1865 in the Second Empire style, this fine home offers three levels of luxurious living space.

If you want to be just steps away from all Salem has to offer, then this home is for you, says listing agent Pam McKee of Keller Williams Realty of Salem. "With all the amenities Salem has to offer on your doorstep, this home is still incredibly private and quiet," she says.

Entering through the majestic iron gates to the front door, you are brought back to a time of elegant refinement. Throughout the four- or five-bedroom, four-bathroom home, period details have been so lovingly maintained that one expects to hear the hoof beats of a coach-and-four pulling up to the door to bring guests for tea.

The first level of the home opens with the formal living room with fireplace, extraordinary picture-frame paneling, and stunning crown moldings. It's the kind of impressive space that's perfect for hosting a fancy party, yet it's warm enough for a cozy night at home with a favorite book. A handsome, decorative fireplace adds to the festive dining room and an exquisite, built-in china cabinet awaits your treasures.

The kitchen and butler's pantry, all in rich cherry, maintain 19th-century sensibility paired with a modern kitchen, complete with granite counters and quality appliances. A three-quarter bath finishes the first level.

The second level offers



Located in the heart of the historic district, this stunning home is bursting with period details, such as crown moldings and picture-frame paneling.



The main living level shines with formal living and dining rooms featuring original fireplaces and decorative trims.

three bedrooms, including the impressive master bedroom, and one full and one three-quarter bath. The master bedroom is a large, tranquil space with a striking marble fireplace as its centerpiece. Upstairs on the top level of the residence are two additional, good-size bedrooms; the fourth bath and a wonderful family room. The space, with its cathedral



The modern kitchen features rich cherry cabinetry, granite countertops and a convenient butler's pantry.

ceiling, is currently used as an artist studio.

There is parking for two cars — something that's nearly impossible to find in downtown Salem. The spacious brick courtyard is a

charming space for outdoor parties or simply relaxing in a chaise and enjoying the lovely container garden.

The McIntire District, which is just steps from the delightful shops, restaurants

## AT A GLANCE

- Historic home located in Salem's McIntire District
- 3,228 square feet
- 5 bedrooms
- 4 baths
- Parking for two cars
- Many original architectural features
- \$719,000
- LISTED BY**
- Pam McKee
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Pam McKee

and museums of Salem, was formally recognized as an historic district in 1981. It celebrates Samuel McIntire, the city's most famous architect-carver, who lived in the neighborhood and designed many of the city's most famous buildings, including Hamilton Hall, which is still considered a jewel of the area.

With its important 18th- and early 19th-century homes, the McIntire District is home to the most beautiful streetscapes in America. The home is convenient to both the commuter rail train station and the seasonal ferry to Boston.

"This is a location that can't be beat for proximity to Salem's bustling downtown," says McKee. "Salem is a Destination City and today's buyers are looking for walkability to restaurants, shops and cultural events."

"Single-family homes are few and far between in the McIntire District, and this one is both affordable and generously sized."

# SEASONAL HAVENS

## Bring big style to outdoor spaces of all shapes and sizes

By KIM COOK  
ASSOCIATED PRESS

Magazines this time of year are fond of featuring expansive outdoor spaces with sprawling gardens and entertaining areas.

But for many people, especially city dwellers, the at-home, al fresco area is more postage-stamp than palatial.

Not a problem, says Katy Kiick Condon, a senior editor at Better Homes & Gardens magazine. She advises using the same space-saving tricks outdoors that you do indoors.

Think of the terrace as an extension of the kitchen or living room.

“Try using the same color scheme and styles. The continuity will visually combine the spaces, and make your terrace feel larger,” Condon said. “Outside, you can punch up the colors, and be a little more playful with art and decor.”

New furniture designs for 2016 take into account the challenges of limited space, said Jackie Hirschhaut, executive director of the International Casual Furnishings Association’s outdoor division.

“Manufacturers have created compact, functional furnishings that add style and comfort to even the most pint-size patios,” she said.

A round table can work for stand-up cocktails or as a dining table, with sturdy, stylish, stackable chairs brought into service.

Check out West Elm’s Mosaic table collection; tiled tops in a variety of patterns come on wood or metal

*“Try using the same color scheme and styles. The continuity will visually combine the spaces, and make your terrace feel larger. Outside, you can punch up the colors, and be a little more playful with art and decor.”*

Katy Kiick Condon, senior editor at Better Homes & Gardens magazine

bases.-

Bend Goods has a hip, little stacking chair made of galvanized wire, available in neutrals as well as amethyst and emerald.

Some manufacturers have started producing “balcony height” chairs and tables for the outdoor market; they’re tall enough that you can see over the railing, but not so tall that you could fall over it.

If you’re more into lounging than dining outdoors, forgo a table for one or two comfy chaises or chairs. Look for colorful, folding Adirondack chairs made of recycled, durable synthetic wood.-

Or Target’s Bryant faux wood/upholstered club chair has uptown chic. Use small ottomans and trays for refreshments.

Gloster Furniture’s shapely little Bells matte aluminum table, in white, meteor, coral or aqua, can be had with either a tray top or ice bucket insert, making it a great space-saver.

Consider a vibrant outdoor area rug. Dash & Albert’s Catamaran collection features jaunty stripes in a range of hues.-

To add some interesting light sources, hang a pendant over a table or change

existing sconces, Condon suggested.

“With the improvements in solar- and battery-powered lights, there are tons of options that don’t require hardwiring,” she said.

Add some art to your “indoor-outdoor room.” Look for maps, photos or vintage ads that reference your home’s location.

As for window treatments for terrace doors, outdoor fabrics have improved, feeling and looking more like interior textiles. At [www.spoonflower.com](http://www.spoonflower.com), you can even design your own fabric pattern.

“Build up, not out,” Condon said. Use vertical space by bringing in tall potted plants, hanging planters from the ceiling or creating a screen of planters. Look for colorful, pattern-rich umbrellas that tilt and shift. CB2 has a small-space sun shade worth checking out.

Dwell.com has the retro Bullet planter, a reproduction of a 1950s design. Available in a range of midcentury hues, it’s got a space-age-y vibe, perched on tripod legs. Also at the retailer, the Little Jack tabletop planter; the walnut base is shaped like a playful jack, and the powder-coated vessel comes in sky blue,



Target.com via AP

If you aren’t planning on sit-down dining on your small terrace, you don’t need a table. Instead, consider focusing on one or two comfy seats, like these Bryant club chairs from Target, and add a small ottoman or table that can hold a tray when you’re dining al fresco.



CB2 via AP

The woven structure of the loveseat, like B2’s Ixtapa option, creates a lighter profile than a heavier piece of furniture, making it a nice option for a small outdoor area where traditional seating might overwhelm the space.

frosty white or citrus.

If you’ve got a view, don’t block it. Orient the furniture to take advantage of it.

But what if you’ve really got no room for any furnishings, and no view either?

“If the best part is just 10

square feet of fresh air, add a gorgeous runner and find some plants to breathe it in with you,” Condon said.

# Swampscott's newest seaside neighborhood in high demand

By LILLIAN SHAPIRO  
DIRECTOR OF REAL ESTATE  
ADVERTISING

If you've been dreaming of affordable new construction in a seaside community, Atlantic Crossing might just be the answer to your prayers, but you'll need to act fast. With just three house lots left for sale, Swampscott's latest residential development is on the fast track to being "sold out."

"Just last month alone, we closed on three homes here," says broker and listing agent Kathleen Sullivan of The Sullivan Team at RE/MAX Advantage Real Estate.

"The call for high-quality, new construction with great attention to detail is very high in this area, so it is little wonder why these homes are in such demand. This builder has good vision and attention to detail, and when you see these homes, you will agree."

The final three homes are currently under construction, with foundations poured and new layouts designed, and are inching toward completion in about six to eight months.

While representing various styles, all 14 of the homes in this enclave feature wide-open, flexible floor plans. They boast three and four bedrooms and standard high-end features, such as hardwood flooring on the main level, soaring ceilings, crown moldings and chair rails; gourmet kitchens with copious cabinetry, stainless appliances and granite countertops; gas fireplaces and two-car garages.

In addition to this long list of amenities, buyers interested in the remaining homes will have the opportunity to customize with first- or second-floor master suites and home offices, as well as



Just three dwelling sites remain in this enclave of 14 brand-new homes.



Gourmet kitchens complete with generous cabinets, stainless-steel appliances and granite countertops are standard in every home.

upgrades such as additional fireplaces, oversized kitchen islands and finished basements for added recreational space.

Designed after the somewhat old-fashioned, close-knit neighborhoods of years ago, Atlantic Crossing features wide sidewalks, street lamps and welcoming

farmers porches. Making this community even more appealing is the promise of low-maintenance living. Thanks to a well-managed Home Owners Association, residents will be freed of the burden of general landscaping and snow removal.

Perfectly situated just minutes from the ocean and area



The development's wide-open floor plans are furnished with gas fireplaces, hardwood flooring, crown moldings and chair rails on the first level.

park, Atlantic Crossing is also convenient to schools, shopping, walking paths and the commuter rail.

"No matter the style, every house here is spacious and beautifully appointed," says Sullivan.

"They are all attractive, single-family homes on individual lots that come complete with the easy lifestyle

typically found only in condo living," she adds.

Prices are expected to range from the high \$600,000s to the low- to mid-\$700,000s. For additional information on design options, pricing or on the development itself, call Kathleen Sullivan at 781-639-1669 or visit [www.AtlanticCrossingSwampscott.com](http://www.AtlanticCrossingSwampscott.com).

## AT A GLANCE

- 14 new construction homes with just 3 remaining
- 3 to 4 bedrooms
- 2.5 baths
- 2,300 to 2,700 square feet



Kathleen and Terry Sullivan

- High \$600,000s to low- to mid-\$700,000s

### LISTED BY

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- The Sullivan Team, RE/MAX Advantage Real Estate
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# Uniquely timeless: Dispelling myths about natural stone

## FAMILY FEATURES

Natural stone is one of the most beautiful materials available for residential and commercial design. Each piece is unique and can fit effortlessly into a variety of decors, making it a top choice for consumers and designers.

While natural stone is a popular material, there are several myths surrounding its use that cause homeowners to question its practicality.

### Myth: Natural Stone Stains Easily

Staining is a big concern for many homeowners considering natural stone. A common misconception is that common products like red wine, cosmetics or coffee will stain natural stone countertops beyond repair.

While staining can occur on any light-colored material, including some lighter stones, Carl Vona Jr., president of Paramount Stone in Connecticut, said that most stains are treatable.

“We can always troubleshoot the problem,” he said. “If you know the origin of the stain, you can care for it.”

Jennifer M. Foresman, owner of Madison & Wells Design, recommends being mindful of material choice if stains are a concern.

“If a client wants white marble for their bathrooms, I would recommend using it in the master bath rather than a child’s bathroom,” Foresman said. “White granite would be a beautiful option for a child’s bathroom — it gives a similar look, but is more stain resistant.”

### Myth: Natural Stone is Expensive

Natural stone is often found in high-end projects, but that doesn’t mean it is out of reach for more modest budgets. For instance, the cost of natural stone countertops depends on a variety of factors, including availability and demand.



*“It offers a sense of history, nature or drama to a space while always feeling authentic. Stone also brings depth and texture to a space that is hard to replicate. It’s been used for centuries as a building material; while it can change in appearance over time, most styles age very gracefully.”*

**Jennifer M. Foresman, owner of Madison & Wells Design**

Always use a cutting board when preparing food on natural stone countertops, especially with acidic foods such as tomato sauce or lemons. Consider using coasters and trivets under glasses and hot pans. Clean up spills as quickly as possible. Do not use harsh cleaning products on natural stone — instead, choose a gentle cleanser and a soft cloth.

### Myth: Natural Stone Goes Out of Style

While particular colors and finishes may come in and out of fashion, natural stone is a timeless, classic material.

“You can’t go wrong,” Thiel said. “Natural stone is beautiful and durable.”

Natural stone also adds a level of romance not found in any other product.

“It offers a sense of history, nature or drama to a space while always feeling authentic,” Foresman said. “Stone also brings depth and texture to a space that is hard to replicate. It’s been used for centuries as a building material; while it can change in appearance over time, most styles age very gracefully.”

*For more information on natural stone care and maintenance, and to find a stone supplier in the area, visit [usenaturalstone.com](http://usenaturalstone.com).*



Photo courtesy of Chris Frick

**ABOVE: Natural stone isn’t only an option for high-end projects. It’s an affordable, durable option for any homeowner, designers and builders say.**

Photo courtesy of Delta Stone Products

**LEFT: Natural stone can bring history, nature and drama to a space, while always feeling authentic, designers say.**

“Prices vary depending on the movement of the slab and the color,” said Susan Thiel, founder of Susan Thiel Design. “Sometimes we find that natural stone is less expensive than manmade materials.”

### Myth: Natural Stone is Delicate and Requires Maintenance

Softer stones, such as marble

or limestone, can be susceptible to etching or scratching. However, this can be prevented by taking simple measures.

# MOVE OVER STOVE, SINK, FRIDGE



Some kitchens today are incorporating two islands, instead of one, to allow plenty of space for work and entertainment.

HOME DEPOT VIA AP

'Super kitchens' becoming more high-tech,  
functional for today's families

BY MELISSA RAYWORTH  
ASSOCIATED PRESS

American kitchens have always served as more than cooking and eating spaces. Generations of kids have done homework at kitchen tables. Parents claim counter space to organize family miscellany, tap out work emails on laptops or install a television.

But now those work and entertainment uses are part of kitchen design from the get-go.

The era of the “super kitchen” has arrived.

“Our findings show that homeowners expect kitchen renovations to go far beyond improving flow, storage or aesthetics,” says Nino Sitchinava, principal economist at Houzz.com, in announcing the site’s 2016 Kitchen Trends Survey. “The ‘super kitchen’ has literally become a living room, family room and office, with finishes, layouts and decor that challenge us to define where the kitchen ends and the rest of the home begins.”

Interior designer Mikel Welch calls the kitchen “the new epicenter of the house.”

“Everybody’s working from home,” and they often prefer doing that in an open kitchen rather than a sequestered home office.

What are the features of a true “super kitchen”?

#### HIGH-TECH STATIONS

Designer Tiffany Brooks, host of HGTV’s “Most Embarrassing Rooms in America,” says homeowners want technology within easy reach, but protected from food and drink spills. Some add a built-in iPad docking area or laptop station on a counter, while others choose the less expensive option of adding a tablet dock mounted under a cabinet, with an arm that swings out.

People also want power. Pop-up outlets are being installed directly into countertops, says Sarah Fishburne, director of trend and design for the Home Depot. Wireless “charging countertops” are also available, including LG’s Tech Top and Dupont Corian. And homeowners are adding extra power outlets throughout the kitchen, and designing



HOME DEPOT VIA AP

**An oversized island with ample seating is a popular trend in today’s super kitchens.**

dedicated charging areas with power strips.

The goal, says Fishburne, is to have “many outlets readily available for anything you might need to plug in, from computer to glue gun.”

Another tech choice: Dishwashers that run almost silently, so they won’t distract you while you’re working in the kitchen. And full-size televisions are being added to the main cooking area so you can do your binge-watching in the same place where you try to avoid binge-eating.

The traditional focus of kitchen planning — a stove-sink-refrigerator triangle — has become a square, Welch says, with the TV added as a core necessity.

Occasionally, new kitchen technology does involve food: “Warming drawers are huge,” Brooks says. Because many people work nontraditional hours, “somebody is cooking at 2,” she says, “but then somebody is eating at 5, and somebody is coming home at 9.”



HOME DEPOT VIA AP

**A built-in desk in the kitchen is designed to match the rest of the décor to make the kitchen area more functional, while maintaining a fluid feel.**

And some people, Welch says, “want to essentially bring Starbucks to them.” Restaurant-quality drink facilities are being added to home kitchens, including elaborate built-in tea and coffee stations, built-in soda systems, faucets with a sparkling water spigot and temperature-controlled

wine refrigerators.

#### MORE SURFACES, MORE SEATING, MORE STORAGE

“An emerging trend is two islands being incorporated into a kitchen, if there is space,” says Fishburne. “This allows for a prep island and an island to accommodate other family functions like

work or homework while you are preparing dinner.”

Several of Welch’s design clients have requested oversized countertops that “allow six to eight people to comfortably sit with barstools,” he says.

Lounging-friendly seating is a priority, whether or not guests will be eating. If a kitchen doesn’t have space for a sectional sofa or other large seating, some homeowners are knocking down walls to merge the kitchen with other rooms. Houzz says half of its survey respondents reported making their kitchens more open to other indoor spaces.

And along with opening up the kitchen to the rest of the house, many homeowners are decorating the kitchen to match other rooms.

“The kitchen is becoming a lot prettier,” Brooks says. “It is what the living room was” years ago.

The kitchen backsplash area can be a creative

showcase, the designers say, using custom-made tiles or even antique mirrored glass.

Kitchen storage, too, is becoming more stylish and more organized. Closet-design systems originally conceived for bedroom closets are now being used to organize kitchen cabinets and pantries, Brooks says.

And rather than cramming work papers or family files into a cabinet designed for dishes, designers are building office and crafts storage into the kitchen. Many kitchens now have desks or computer workstations, and the days of bringing in “horrible, chunky rolling cabinets” to store files is over, says Welch. Non-kitchen items are stored in “built-ins that match the rest of the kitchen.”

Whether they’re asking for the most flattering lighting or details like high-end brass cabinet pulls, clients want everything to be beautiful, Welch says. More than ever, they want “that visual ‘wow’ factor.”

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# Resort-like grandeur that's warm and inviting at Ferncroft Estates

BY NANCY MADES-BYRD  
CORRESPONDENT

As soon as you begin your ascent up the winding drive to this spectacular home in Ferncroft Estates, you know you are in for something special. Elegantly situated on 2.4 acres between the 16th and 17th holes of the Ferncroft Country Club championship golf course, this Topsfield home embraces an extraordinary lifestyle.

Although built only 15 years ago, the captivating lines of this home recall the great houses of an earlier age.

The 7,567-square-foot home is as charming as it is impressive. Rich, detailed woodwork; coffered ceilings and beautiful hardwood floors are just a few of the timeless and impeccable features you will see from the grand foyer when you enter the home. An expansive, wraparound porch offers spectacular views of the landscape and the resort-worthy outdoor pool area.

And it gets even better. "The incredible quality of craftsmanship is evident in every detail of the home, from the crystal doorknobs to the exquisite kitchen in the pool house," said listing agent Heather Grant Murray of Harborside Sotheby's International Realty.

"This is such an exceptionally well-thought-out property, and what I love most about this house is that with all its grandeur, it is still so warm and inviting."

The main-floor living space is comprised of the welcoming living room with a fireplace, the dining room, and an outstanding home office, complete with a coffered ceiling and a fireplace.

The gourmet kitchen inspires with top-of-the-line



This stunning home is situated in the executive neighborhood of Ferncroft Estates. It sits regally between the 16th and 17th holes of the Ferncroft Country Club's golf course.



A wraparound porch at the rear of the home overlooks a gorgeous pool area, complete with a separate pool house featuring a full kitchen.

appliances, abundant storage and thoughtful design. It is a space created to satisfy the demands of both veteran and novice home chefs. A bath, mudroom and laundry room complete this level.

The second level of this 18-room residence combines spaces for both rest and play. Four generous bedrooms share two full baths — an ideal layout for large families or those with frequent guests.

The master bedroom suite is an oasis that offers the ideal setting from which to begin or

end your day. The suite hosts a cozy fireplace, an enormous walk-in closet, and a fantastic master bath with a double vanity, large soaking tub and steam room.

Entertaining on a large and small scale is easy in the second-floor game room, which has the space for a pool table, a poker table and a lounge area to watch sports.

Adjacent to the game room is the home movie theater, complete with plush theater seats and a high-end sound system. The home gym on the



Multiple fireplaces, a gourmet kitchen, a breathtaking master suite, a home theater and a second-floor game room are among the exceptional features of this home.

lowest level will inspire you to maintain your workout routine or start a new one.

The top level of the home features two more generously sized bedrooms and a full bath.

"The owners have said this has been an idyllic place to raise their children and has afforded the best of both worlds," Murray said.

"Here, the Ferncroft Estates neighborhood and the country club provide countless

opportunities for socializing and fun for both kids and adults, but the placement of the home up on the hill offers all the privacy anyone could want or need."

The outside spaces of the property are designed to complement the tranquility of a day spent listening to the gentle rush of the waterfall by the gunite pool, or a cookout serving up dinner from the enormous outdoor grill area with granite counters.

## AT A GLANCE

- 18 rooms
- 7,567 square feet
- 2.4 acres on the Ferncroft Country Club golf course
- 7 bedrooms
- 5 full baths



Heather Grant Murray

- In-ground pool
- \$1,999,900

### LISTED BY

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Indeed, the patio has hosted a wedding for 200 guests. A fabulous pool house features a full bath, washer and dryer, and the aforementioned kitchen, complete with marble counters, a seating area, dishwasher and refrigerator.

The grounds are meticulously maintained, from soft, grassy play areas to the game court.

In addition to garage parking for three vehicles, there are seven driveway parking spots. The cul-de-sac location offers both privacy and security.

This special home is offered at \$1,999,900 and is shown by appointment. An open house is planned for Sunday, May 15, from noon to 1:30 p.m., at 82 Coppermine Road.

For more information or to schedule a private showing, contact Heather Grant Murray at 617-967-8231. Visit [www.82CoppermineRoad.com](http://www.82CoppermineRoad.com) for photos and a video tour.

# Coming to your kitchen and backyard: Professional-worthy pizza ovens

BY KAREN SCHWARTZ  
ASSOCIATED PRESS

Take-out pizza is fine when you feel like going out. But making your own pies at home is the newest trend, with pizza ovens designed for the kitchen or backyard.

This spring, one of the most recognizable names in home appliances will go after a piece of that pie when GE Monogram starts selling a \$10,000 electric, residential wall model designed to fit into the space of a standard 30-inch wall oven.

“We saw a considerable market gap when it came to the available at-home options for pizza enthusiasts and home chefs,” said Wayne Davis, commercial leader at FirstBuild, a subsidiary of GE Appliances.

GE fired up its oven and cooked pizza in the middle of the Las Vegas Convention Center at this year’s recent Kitchen and Bath Industry Show.

Sure, their professional chef made it look easy, but like most people, I’d never used a pizza oven. I didn’t even know that the tool used to pull pizza in and out of the oven is called a “peel.”

Wondering what it’s like to use a pizza oven at home, I gave a propane-powered, outdoor, countertop Napoli Pizza Oven from Lynx Grills a try.

Like others, the Napoli has a stainless exterior, a pizza stone, and a stone-like interior designed to reflect heat like a brick oven. It requires about 30 minutes or so to heat to an internal temperature of 700 degrees or more.

After that, a Neapolitan-style pizza should cook in a matter of minutes, but the ovens also can be adjusted to cook other styles of pizza and calzone.

The Napoli was at the mercy of the elements, and



Lynx Grills’ Napoli Pizza Oven can be used to make various types of pizza, calzones, pot roast, bread and fajitas.

LYNX GRILLS, INC. VIA AP



Kalamazoo Outdoor Gourmet debuted its \$11,000 freestanding Artisan Fire Pizza Oven at the Kitchen and Bath Industry Show earlier this year.

SAM SHELANSKI/Kalamazoo Outdoor Gourmet via AP



The built-in Artisan Fire Pizza Oven was released in 2015. Once it reaches 800 degrees, it can cook a Neapolitan-style pizza in less than three minutes.

ANTHONY TAHLIER/Kalamazoo Outdoor Gourmet via AP

my experiment was interrupted by high winds and cool ambient temperature. Working around the environmental curveballs and my own inexperience, I eventually made some misshapen pies that were certainly better than frozen, with a nice crunchy crust. But whether it was the recipe or the receptacle, they weren’t quite on par with the ones from my

favorite pizzeria, where pizza-making has been a family tradition for generations.

In addition to the \$4,000 countertop model, the Napoli also comes paired with a freestanding cart at \$6,500 for the set.

Another company, Kalamazoo Outdoor Gourmet, has a \$6,900 outdoor countertop model called the Artisan Fire Pizza Oven that can



GE’s Monogram Pizza Oven brings restaurant-quality cooking capabilities to the home kitchen, enabling home chefs, entertainers, families and pizza enthusiasts to create their favorite recipes quickly and with ease.

GE APPLIANCES VIA AP

be packed up for a tail-gate party.

“It comes in three layers. Each layer can be easily unstacked and moved by one person,” said company spokesman Bradley Carlson.

“It’s not only about the grill anymore,” he said. “People are becoming more sophisticated in terms of what they’re cooking outdoors.”

Last year, the company unveiled a version of the Artisan Fire Pizza Oven that can be built into brick, stone or concrete for a clean look in an outdoor kitchen. It costs \$8,300, plus installation.

At the kitchen show, Kalamazoo debuted an \$11,000 “rolling pizza station” that holds the Artisan Fire oven and features built-in

bins for storing toppings.

Kalamazoo’s Artisan Fire differs in both form and function from the Lynx Napoli, so consumers should do their homework and investigate the scores of pizza-oven options available today from specialty shops and hardware stores.

Will homeowners really spend thousands of dollars on pizza ovens?

Hard to predict. On any given day, 13 percent of the country’s population age 2 and older eats pizza, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. And the number of people making pizza at home using store-bought dough accounted for nearly 10 percent of pizza sales in 2015, up from 3 percent in 2013, according to Consumer Reports.

While most of that was likely not baked in a fancy pizza oven, the good news for homeowners is that should they tire of pizza, the manufacturers say the outdoor ovens can also be used for roasting foods, baking breads or making fajitas.

# Experience country living within rare Wenham estate

BY NANCY MADES-BYRD  
CORRESPONDENT

Situated on more than 2 acres in the heart of Wenham's storied Ledyard Farm area, this stunning Wenham estate is the kind of property that creates a stir when it comes on the market — not just because it's an outstanding offering, but also because homes of this caliber and location are so rarely available for sale.

In fact, the current owners have been the home's only owners — they built it.

The first floor of the gracious four-bedroom, 4½-bathroom home offers formal living and dining rooms, fireplaced family room, home office, chef's kitchen, and the master bedroom suite. Gleaming hardwood floors add elegance throughout the lower-level spaces.

The kitchen features white cabinets, quartz countertops, and every conceivable appliance — including two full-size wall ovens.

The master bedroom retreat boasts two walk-in closets and a luxury bath. A powder room and access to the gorgeous in-ground pool and screened porch with hot tub complete the first floor.

Upstairs are three generous bedrooms and two full baths as well as an oversized game room. The bedrooms all feature plush wall-to-wall carpeting.

One of only four homes on a private way known as Sias Lane, the estate embraces country living at every turn — with the family room overlooking the patio and pool, as well as horse paddocks and open fields. The extensive and expertly manicured grounds evoke an era when the residents of the paddocks



This stunning home sits on more than 2 pristine acres in the Ledyard Farm area.



Boasting nearly 4,500 square feet of living space, this home features four bedrooms, as well as 4 1/2 bathrooms.



The breathtaking grounds are enhanced by an in-ground pool, horse paddocks and open fields.



Jay Burnham Linda Morey

## AT A GLANCE

- 4,365 square feet
- 2.2 acres in heart of North Shore horse country
- 4 bedrooms
- 4½ baths
- In-ground pool
- First-floor master suite
- \$1,150,000

## LISTED BY

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- [www.NewEnglandMoves.com](http://www.NewEnglandMoves.com)

The home itself also boasts many modern amenities, such as central air conditioning and central vacuum.

There's plenty of storage in the full, unfinished basement. In addition to the three-car, attached garage, there is paved parking for six more vehicles and a special, historic stone shed.

Ledyard Farm has been at the center of equestrian life on the North Shore for more than a century. Established in the early 20th century by Hilda and Frederick Ayer, the farm today is home to an historic cross-country race as well as popular modern eventing clinics. The farm has even hosted royalty when Britain's Princess Anne and Captain Mark Phillips competed in its three-day equestrian event.

A virtual tour and interactive floor plan can be viewed at <http://www.planomatic.com/71134>.

represented the main source of transportation. But a short walk along Walnut Street to Hamilton's

shops, restaurants, parks and commuter rail station reminds one that it's the 21st century.

# Beyond the welcome mat

## Making a home's entrance inviting year-round is a breeze

By MELISSA RAYWORTH  
ASSOCIATED PRESS

Want to make a great first impression? Then start outdoors.

Here, three designers — stylist and crafter Marianne Canada, host of the “HGTV Crafternoon” web series; Andrew Howard of Jacksonville, Florida; and Brian Patrick Flynn, designer of the HGTV Dream Home 2016 — offer advice on making a home's entrance inviting and stylish, no matter the season.

### BOLD COLOR

All three designers suggest painting your front door a bold color that delights you. With little expense and just an afternoon's effort, you can give your home's front entrance a major facelift.

“And if you get sick of a bold or dark color, so what?” Flynn said. “It's only a quart of paint to recover a super-small surface.”

For houses with dark brick or siding, he suggests a deep, rich color like forest green.

Canada agrees: “My house is almost black,” she said, and the front door is painted a bright teal with white trim.

Fresh paint is also practical. “Front doors really should be painted every one to two years anyway,” Howard said. “I also love painting doors in a high-gloss finish, or painting the panels one color and the rail and stile another.”

He also recommends painting the front porch ceiling.

And don't forget your home's other entrances: “I like painting secondary exterior doors bold colors,” Flynn said. “In my previous house, I painted the side entrance door bright violet, and it became an excellent conversation starter when guests would come over.”

Canada points out that it's fine to paint on a chilly day “as long as you're above 40 degrees and it's not wet weather.”

### WILDER WREATHS

“A lot of people think fall and winter when it comes to wreaths,” Canada said, but you can hang



Sarah Dorio/Brian Patrick Flynn via AP

**If you love bold colors but worry they will be overpowering on your front door, consider putting a striking shade on a side door instead.**

them year-round. And if you're bored with traditional wreaths, create your own.

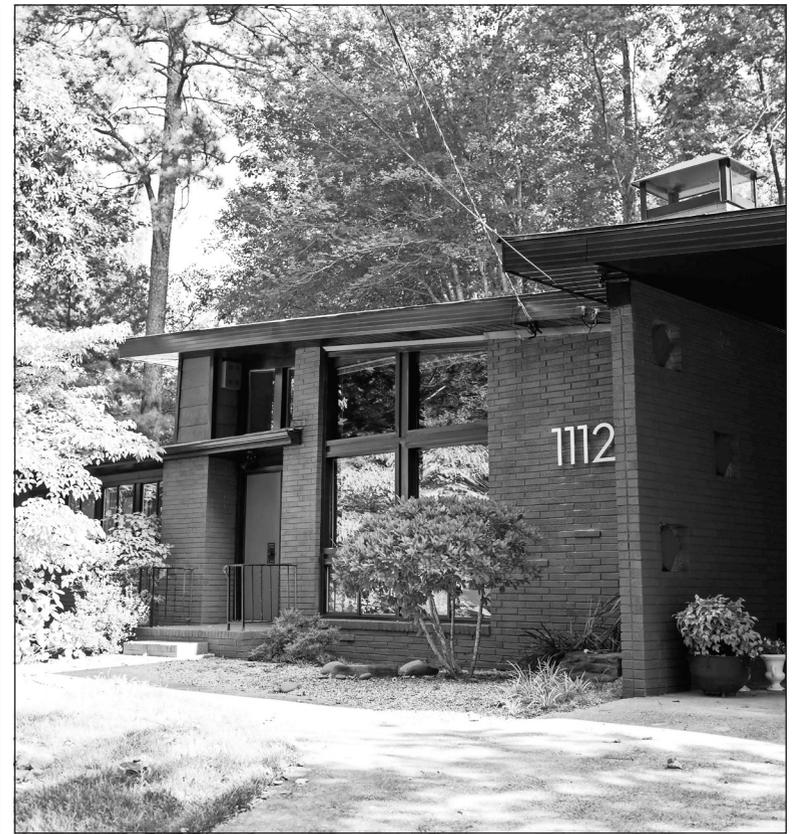
On her door, Canada has a DIY wooden sign (just “a slice of wood,” she said, that's “still got bark on the edges”) painted with chalkboard paint so it can hold any message or picture. “Mine says ‘Come on in!’,” she said. It's the perfect place to let kids draw spring flowers or write their own welcome messages.

Howard also likes to get the

whole family involved in front-door decorating. “Occasionally, if my kids make a wreath or something at school, I will put it up on the front door for a week or so,” he said. “They can proudly show their friends when they come in.”

### HOT HOUSE NUMBERS

“Gone are the days when people would just buy those reflective sticker numbers and put them on their mailbox and call it done,” Canada said. We're now seeing



Rustic White Photography/Brian Patrick Flynn via AP

**Oversized house numbers in a clean, modern font are practical and stylish, adding a burst of personality to this mid-century modern house.**

“beautiful house numbers ... and going oversize.”

Flynn sees big, raised house numbers as an investment in the front of a house.

“I'm all about splurging on house numbers that honor the architecture of the house, and also going way oversize with them so they're easily visible from the street,” he said. “I usually opt for laser-cut metallic numbers installed on 2-inch standoffs so they leave a little shadow effect.”

Brushed stainless-steel numbers look great on dark-colored houses, Canada said, and classic wrought iron can be gorgeous on a traditional house.

### ENTERTAINING EVERYWHERE

People are starting to use more of the yard for entertaining, Canada said, including front porches and stoops, not just backyards or decks hidden from the street.

Some are putting fire pits in front or side yards in view of neighbors. “It's a lot more welcoming,” she said.

Howard likes to welcome guests with potted plants flanking an entry door. “They can be changed out from time to time and are not very expensive,” he said.

If the house is the right style, Howard said, “I love a great comfortable porch swing. They make them oversize nowadays where you can get comfortable and really stretch out. I also love the idea of a great tile on the front porch, particularly Spanish or Cuban style.”

“I am also a big proponent of changing the light fixtures, sconces and door hardware from time to time,” he said. “They can get worn and dirty after a while, and changing them makes for a big improvement.”

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# Digital Design

## Décor inspiration is just a click away

By SARAH WOLFE  
ASSOCIATED PRESS

There's Houzz. Remodelista. Home design Twitter feeds. Tumblr accounts. And of course, the granddaddy of all online décor depositories — Pinterest.

It's easy to get overwhelmed by online resources when remodeling or redecorating. Where should you start?

For homeowner Sarah Schuster Canahuati, creating an "ideabook" on Houzz was the perfect way to mesh her rustic, farmhouse style with her husband's more modern tastes when they began renovating their home recently.

"It was a very helpful way to give our architect and designer very clear ideas of what we wanted in our remodel, from paint colors to appliances to overall style," she says.

Home design experts and contractors echo those thoughts, and offer the following tips on how to harness the bounty of the Internet for your next project:

### GET ORGANIZED

First, figure out the scope of your project and your goals. Redoing your kitchen, for example, is a lot different and more involved than finding a few natural accents for your living room mantle.



Decor Aid via AP

Décor Aid co-founder and designer Sean Juneja suggests finding a design you like online, and then replicating the various elements to work in your home.



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Are you going to do the work yourself? How-to blogs and sites like All Things Thrifty, DIY Network and This Old House are your new BFFs.

Looking more for ideas to pass on to a contractor or designer? Head over to Houzz or Pinterest.

Don't overlook retailers though. Paint company websites are an underutilized home-design resource, says designer Karen Gray Plaisted.

"Many times, clients have problems with colors," she says. "Benjamin Moore, Sherwin Williams and PPG Paints all have fantastic interactive sites to allow them to 'try' a color out, or find a palette virtually first. It also helps me as a decorator to then narrow down the array of colors to find the right one for them."

Annalisa Nash Fernandez, a business owner and self-described "serial mover," started a Facebook group with friends who are also into decorating.

"I post all my design quandaries there, and get instant feedback," she says.

#### FIND YOUR STYLE

Figure out what you love. Are you a boho-chic kind of girl or do you gravitate more toward the clean, traditional lines of craftsman-style homes?

"To use home-design websites to find your own style, I'd advise you to pin or bookmark photos of every single room you love," says Amy Bell, owner of Red Chair Home Interiors. "The more rooms you save, the larger your 'data sample' will be. Once you have collected many images, take a step back and look for common themes that the images share."

Are there recurring colors or color combinations? Are you drawn to dramatic contrasts, like white cabinets paired with dark floors? Are the rooms sparsely or heavily furnished and accessorized? What do you notice about architectural elements like windows, doors, fireplaces and ceiling height?

## VIRTUAL DECORATING

**Houzz:** houzz.com

**Pinterest:** pinterest.com

**Remodelista:** remodelista.com

**Apartment Therapy:** apartmenttherapy.com

**All Things Thrifty:** allthings-thrifty.com

**DIY Network:** diynetwork.com

**This Old House:** thisoldhouse.com

**Roomstyler:** roomstyler.com

**IKEA Home Planner:** ikea.com/ms/en\_JP/rooms\_ideas/splash-planners.html

**Lowe's Virtual Room**

**Designer:** lowes.com/cd\_virtual+room+designer\_189310537

"Having a theme and palette in mind really helps narrow down the infinite options on design sites and blogs," says Patricia Leitao, marketing manager and blogger for the Boston-based site homeyou, which matches homeowners with area contractors.

#### CREATE A PROJECT PAGE OR BOARD

"Collection" sites like Houzz and Pinterest allow users to create an unlimited number of boards or "ideabooks." Go big and create one board for your entire project, or go smaller with more specific boards like "paint colors," "accessories," "furniture," etc.

As a way to keep track of ideas, these are easier and more visual than a list of bookmarks or a scrapbook of pages ripped from books and magazines.

They're also a great resource if you decide to hire a contractor or home designer.

"We love going through our clients' inspiration boards on content-rich sites. It gives us an immediate look into their personal style and preferences, and we can help them narrow down exactly what will fit into their space and budget," says interior designer Margo Nathanson.

#### DESIGN IT YOURSELF

If you're looking for the ultimate in control, IKEA,



Decor Aid via AP

**ABOVE:** Décor Aid co-founder and designer Sean Juneja turned to home design blogs and other online resources to help create this bright, yet rustic living room with industrial accents.

**RIGHT:** Home design blogs and other online design resources can be a big help when it comes to remodeling or redecorating at home, says Design Aid's Sean Juneja, who created this light and airy breakfast nook.

Lowe's and smaller sites like Roomstyler let you design your own rooms from scratch with a virtual planner. Type in your room's dimensions, then drag and drop furnishings, windows and other elements where you want.

Try an unlimited variety of cabinet and countertop combinations when remodeling your kitchen. Or see what your living room would look like with wooden floors. Then tile. Maybe concrete.

Don't like it? Simply press delete.



# Keep pests away: Avoid pratfalls that can lead to unwelcome guests

It's prime house-hunting season. And with warmer temperatures and increased rain, it is also the season when pesky creatures can invade homes. Even minor flaws in a new home should not be ignored as they can potentially lead to pest damage.

Ron Harrison, Ph.D., entomologist with Orkin, recommends new homeowners avoid making these five mistakes:

## Disregarding tiny cracks

Even tiny cracks and crevices in the foundation, doorways and walls where pipes enter the home could be inviting ants, roaches, spiders, rodents and other pests inside.

Rodents can squeeze through an opening as small as a quarter and even through a hole as small as a dime in some cases. Ants and insects can enter through tiny crevices, too.

Pests are attracted to shelter, food and water. Homeowners should promptly clean up all water and food spills; seal any cracks and crevices around doors, windows and pipes; and install weather stripping around and under all doors, including garage doors.

## Overlooking insulation

A home's attic can be a gateway inside for many pests that nest in insulation. It's important to inspect insulation for pest activity and damage: insulation that is wet, matted down, chewed or covered with droppings.

New insulation technology incorporates materials specifically designed to help deter household pests.

## Ignoring flooring and siding damage

Termites are called "silent destroyers" because they may be secretly hiding and thriving in a home or yard



Getty Images/Courtesy photo

**Homebuyers are wise to take steps to avoid inviting pests and critters into their newly purchased properties.**

without immediate signs of damage. They cause more than \$5 billion in damage every year in the United States, according to the National Pest Management Association.

House foundations, wood

framing, furniture and shelves are all possible feeding sites for termites. In spring, termites can be seen swarming around windows or doors. Other signs of termite activity include buckling wood, swollen floors

and ceilings and areas that appear to be suffering from slight water damage.

Brick and mortar homes are not termite-proof as they have wooden components, such as framing and flooring, that can host

termite infestations. It's important to work with a licensed professional to provide regular inspections.

## Not repairing leaks

Minor leaks may seem to be just that — minor — but leaks or condensation, combined with increasing temperatures in the spring, can create ideal conditions for cockroaches and other pests.

American cockroaches, "camel crickets" and springtails can enter homes through tiny cracks and are attracted to damp areas, both in the attic or crawl space and indoors in the basement, kitchen or bathroom.

Small steps make a big difference. Fix leaking faucets, water pipes and air conditioning units and eliminate standing water on the roof or in gutters to help prevent an infestation.

*For more information to help prevent common household pests, visit [Orkin.com](http://Orkin.com).*

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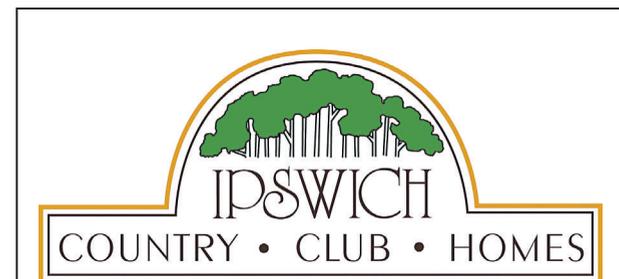


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