

SPRING HOME AND GARDEN

B SECTION • THE CRITTENDEN PRESS • THURSDAY, MAY 10, 2018

Fixer upper Couple flips shabby home into house of their dreams

PHOTOS & STORY By ALLISON EVANS
THE CRITTENDEN PRESS

It took two years of blood, sweat – and even a few tears – for Michael and Jackie Wood to reach the vision they had for a small, run-down home purchased out of foreclosure.

Location drew the young Crittenden County couple to the property on Levias Road. It certainly was neither the flooded basement nor storm-damaged roof. They found holes in the bathroom ceiling and kitchen, and vandalism had left basement windows in shambles. The sight of the molded siding, sunken roof and deplorable interior didn't scare the couple away either.

This wasn't their first real estate flip. They knew going in what to expect.

They purchased their first fixer upper in Colorado while Michael was enlisted in the U.S. Air Force. Sadly, with the crash of the housing market in 2008, they sold it for the purchase price and felt fortunate.

It didn't deter them from trying again upon returning to Kentucky. They fared much better when they flipped a home in Livingston County, doubling their money upon its sale.

Then they turned their sights to the house in the Levias community near Michael's family, living across the road in a double-wide while waiting for the bank to release their next project from foreclosure.

As they fixed up the mobile home they were living in, they looked out their front door at the 1,500-square-foot home that was in desperate need of ... well, everything. It turned out to be a complete gut job, starting with a basement full of water from storm damage, busted pipes and months of neglect.

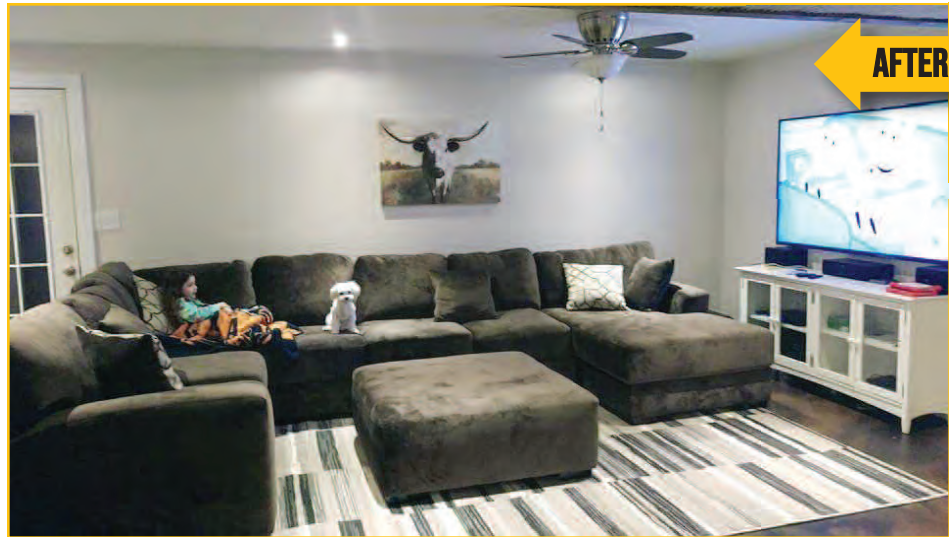
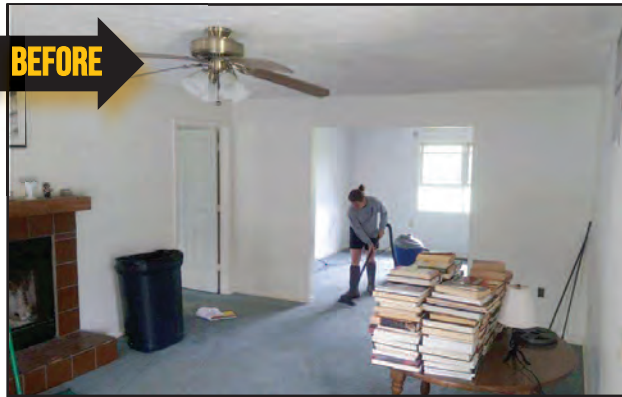
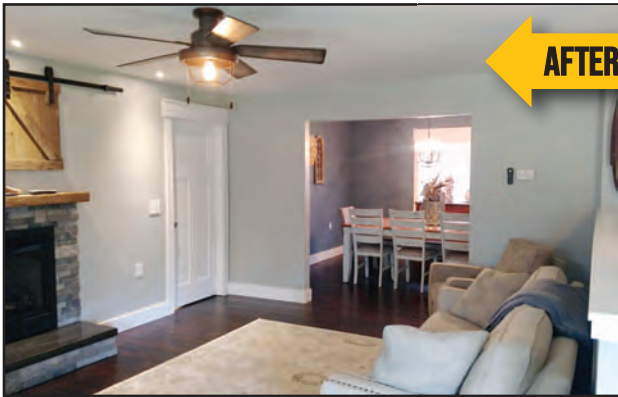
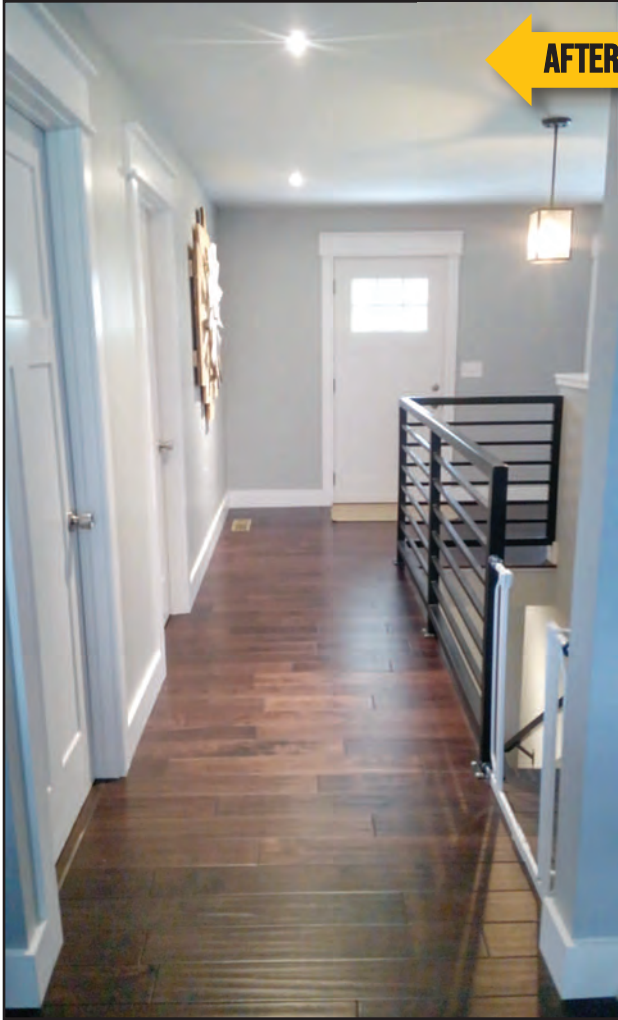
When they finally were cleared to purchase the early 1990s home from the bank, the couple – with three children under age 9 at the

See **FIXER**/Page 9B



PHOTOS BY ALLISON EVANS, THE PRESS

Michael and Jackie Wood spent two years turning a mistreated home on Levias Road that they purchased in foreclosure into a 3,200-square-foot dream home. Above, the couple stands in their newly-renovated kitchen. The before-and-after comparisons on this page show the exterior (top), and interior hallway (just below), the living room (middle) and the basement (bottom). Additional photos on Page 9B show more of the transformation.



From ants to wasps, pest control rite of springtime

METRO SERVICES

Just when winter thaws out and people are anxious to enjoy the blooming flowers and luscious lawns of spring, pesky pests can appear and impact comfort levels and safety.

Many pests resume their levels of activity as spring draws closer and temperatures warm up. The presence of these insects and rodents may cause problems in and around a home, which makes it essential to recognize them and avoid issues. The following are some of the more common spring pests and how to remedy infestations.

- Pavement ants: Pavement ants are some of the most common pests residents encounter inside and outside of their homes. These ants are light brown to black with appendages that are lighter than the rest of their bodies. Small in stature, pavement ants have parallel lines on their heads and thorax, according to pest extermination company Orkin.

Although pavement ants nest outdoors, they can enter homes through small crevices in search of food scraps. Their large colonies may not disappear until treatment is introduced. Keep foods in tightly sealed containers, clear counters and floors of crumbs, and address water sources, such as leaks. Pesticides may be needed in extreme conditions.

- Fleas: Fleas are tiny, jumping, biting pests that must find a host upon which to live. As ectoparasites, they feed on blood while living on the body of



METRO SERVICES

In the springtime, with warmer weather, pesky insects like ants (above) can appear and impact comfort levels and pests like wasps and spiders can affect safety.

living hosts. Pets can bring fleas inside the yard and home in warm weather. According to the University of California Statewide Integrated Pest Management Program, flea larvae develop more quickly at higher temperatures. At normal room temperatures, the entire life cycle of a flea is about 18 days.

Several flea control products are available to control fleas on cats and dogs. There also may be powders and sprays to alleviate flea infestations in the home. Vacuuming is also very effective in killing larvae in the carpet and at picking up adults.

- Wasps: An errant wasp, hornet or yellow jacket may have survived winter and ridden out the colder temperatures within a home. Once the weather warms, queens will begin to look for places to lay eggs and establish colonies. Treating areas where wasps are seen entering and leaving the home is key. Seal holes as soon as

possible.

Although wasps help control other insect populations, their painful stings and potentially aggressive nature can make them challenging to have around a home. If a nest is found, hire a professional to remove it.

- Spiders: Many spiders are not harmful enough to humans and pets to be much of a problem. In fact, spiders can be helpful to have around to control the populations of other insects. Still, many homeowners would prefer these web-slinging friends remain outdoors. Therefore, sealing cracks in a home's foundation and repairing small openings around windows and doors can help keep spiders out. Also, alleviating moisture issues in basements, garages or attics may keep out other bugs that would be prey to spiders.

Homeowners can take the steps necessary to cut down on pests in and around their homes.

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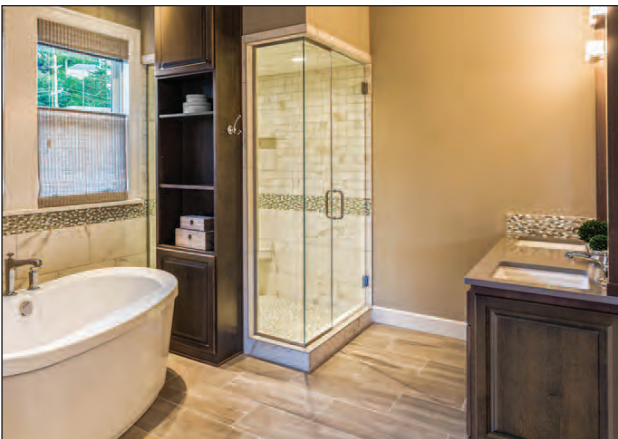
METRO SERVICES

Technology is infiltrating every room of the house. Many new home buyers are millennials, and this tech-savvy demographic covets technological innovations.

A recent survey by Better Homes & Gardens Real Estate indicates 77 percent of Generation X and Y home buyers want their homes equipped with the tech capabilities they have grown accustomed to. Many of these involve smart innovations, including those that can transform one of the most private rooms in the house — the bathroom.

Automated home theater rooms and Wi-Fi-enabled home security systems have become the norm, but what tech improvements are available to make the powder room more in touch with today's digital lifestyle? According to the home improvement resource The Spruce, bathrooms have the most potential of any rooms to be improved with technology. The following are just some of the bathroom gadgets and gizmos no one should resist before giving a try.

- Automatic faucets: In-



METRO SERVICES

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fared sensors have been helping keep public restrooms more hygienic for years. The same technology can be used in home bathrooms to curtail water waste and keep faucets and sinks from becoming infested with germs. In addition, faucets with built-in timers can be programmed to set tasks for brushing teeth or washing your face.

- Musical shower: Instead of having to blast the volume on the portable speaker you use in the bathroom, a wireless speaker is

built into some showerheads. This enables those who like to sing in the shower or listen to podcasts while washing up to enjoy this luxury effortlessly.

- Smarter weight management: Bathroom scales have gone high-tech as well, with various options enabling users to measure weight, BMI and body fat percentage before sending the data wirelessly to a phone, tablet or computer. This can put you in greater control of fitness goals.

- High-tech toilets: Bor-

rowing ideas from bidets and trends around the world, modern toilets do not require hands or paper. These toilets have temperature-controlled water, spritzing wands and air dryers to clean and sanitize. Self-cleaning toilets help busy professionals save time and are ideal for those who always want their bowls as clean as possible. And if you desire extra comfort, toilet seat warmers are available, while LED lights can make nighttime restroom visits easier.

- Soaking tubs: As fast as stand-alone showers were introduced to the modern bathroom, tubless designs have been replaced with streamlined soaking tubs. Tubs come with different features, including chromatherapy, which employs colored lights to enhance mood. Air baths are controlled electronically and provide different levels of sensation for those who are skipping the hot tub.

Round out these innovations with automated lights, chilled medicine cabinets and aromatherapy, and your bathroom will indeed become a technological spa.

Rake, pruners, hose tools of gardening trade

METRO SERVICES

Gardening attracts new devotees year after year. While Baby Boomers may spend more on gardening than any other demographic, even millennials are getting on the gardening bandwagon.

A 2016 National Gardening Survey from the National Gardening Market Research Company found the average amount spent on backyard or

balcony gardening projects exceeded \$400 per household. More than \$36 billion was spent in 2015, and the vast majority of the 6 million "new" gardening households belonged to millennials.

When it comes to outfitting a gardening shed, gardeners will not want to be without certain tools and gear.

- Shovel: A rounded-blade digging shovel is

needed to plant shrubs and trees as well as to excavate areas in a landscape.

- Rake: A rake can be used to clear the ground, remove thatch and leaves from a lawn and level soil in a garden bed.

- Hand tools: Hand tools, such as a hand fork and trowel, are essential for small digging jobs, especially when working with flower pots or containers.

- Edging spade: This flat-blade shovel is handy to have around because of its versatility. Edging spades can slice turf, edge gardens and cut through roots.

- Pruners: Sharpened pruners cut through stems and branches effortlessly.

- Hose: Choose a high-quality hose that is lightweight and durable, as hoses will always be necessary.

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How to clear clogged drain

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Home plumbing systems are designed to handle heavy usage. When everything is working as it should, toilets flush, showers drain properly, and sink basins empty of water in a snap. But when a clog is present in a system, water can quickly back up.

There are various techniques to clear clogged drains. Minor clogs may be cleared without the help of a plumber or even any tools. More significant blockages will require more elbow grease.

The first step to clearing a clog is to locate the problem. Drainage issues that affect a particular sink or toilet may be isolated to that fixture. Clogs that are present throughout the house may be indicative of a larger problem in the plumbing that is directing waste away from the house and into the sewer system.

Sometimes a clog can be freed by pouring boiling hot water or a combination of baking soda and vinegar down the drain. If that doesn't help, move on to a plunger, advise the experts at This Old House. By creating pressure within the pipes, a plunger can dislodge whatever is causing the backup. If the clog seems to be further down the drain, hair or grime may have become trapped. An auger, often referred to as a "plumber's snake," can be inserted into the drain to remove the grime and free up the water flow. Homeowners without access to an auger can try to fish the clog out of the drain with a wire hanger.

If clogs cannot be alleviated, drain traps may need to be accessed. Those who do not know their way around pipes and wrenches should hire a professional.



METRO SERVICES
Before the weather starts to warm up too much, homeowners may want to evaluate their home cooling needs and ensure that all equipment is in good working order.

Prepare HVAC system for increasing temps

METRO SERVICES

The arrival of a new season can be an exciting time. Homeowners may have renewed vigor to start home renovation projects or even tackle some cleaning and organization tasks. Before the weather starts to warm up too much, homeowners may want to evaluate their home cooling needs and ensure that all equipment is in good working order.

Spring air conditioning inspections and tuneups are essential steps in system performance. Homeowners should not take for granted that a system that performed optimally last year will do so this year when temperatures climb. Various factors, including weather damage, dust and grime, mechanical wear and tear, and even rodent or insect infestations, can compromise HVAC systems. Since HVAC systems have so many moving parts, a thorough inspection of such systems can save headaches and money down the road.

According to Heating

Ontario, the extreme weather conditions that come along with fall and winter can be especially taxing on homes and the systems that keep them comfortable. During a spring visit, an HVAC technician will perform maintenance on the air conditioner and make sure it is ready for the heat of summertime. This maintenance may include cleaning the unit, checking controls, calibrating the thermostat, lubricating moving parts, checking refrigerant levels, tightening electrical connections, and clearing any clogs. Homeowners are urged to also change the filter at the start of the cooling season.

Correcting any issues in the HVAC system well in advance of the arrival of warm weather can help ensure comfort when air conditioning is needed. As an added advantage, homeowners should install programmable thermostats if they do not already have them to keep cooling as cost- and energy-efficient as possible.



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Ideas for empty-nesters to transform their home

METRO SERVICES

After bringing home a bubbly baby boy or girl, it can be hard for parents to imagine that a day will come when their kids are off to college and then onto their own apartment or house. After spending decades nurturing and caring for children, parents are then left with a suddenly quiet house and probably much more time to spare. If saying goodbye to the kids also means extra house, there's the option to downsize or make that extra space more useful.

Homeowners who choose to stay put can renovate vacant rooms into spaces that meet their newfound needs.

- Hobby haven: If you've always meant to set up a crafting room, home-brewing station or an artist's studio, now is an ideal time to do just that. Figure out which supplies you will need and begin reworking that former bedroom into a new sanctuary for leisure interests.

- Guest suite: If you've never had a spare bedroom to entertain guests, a child's former bedroom can fit the bill. It may not be that difficult to transform such spaces into relaxing and inviting rooms for overnight guests. Be sure there is at least a queen-sized bed and a dresser or chest of drawers to stash belongings. Select paint colors and linens in neutral tones so the room will be inviting to guests.

- Living room redo: When there's an entire soccer team coming over to hang out, that large sectional sofa or modular seating may be



METRO SERVICES

If saying goodbye to the kids means extra house, there's the option to make extra space more useful.

ideal. Now that the kids are out of the house and their friends are no longer coming over for movie night, living rooms can be made more intimate with small-scale seating. A small sofa and two comfortable chairs may be a more fitting option.

- At-home gym: Save on gym membership fees by building a mini studio right at home. Choose one of the larger bedrooms and then fill it with some fitness equipment, such as an elliptical trainer, a bench press bench and some free weights. Store rolled-up mats in the closet for yoga or Pilates sessions.

- Expanded bathroom: If space has always been at a premium in the bathroom, borrow area from an empty bedroom and turn it into a spa. Install a soaking tub separate from the shower, and fill the room with other amenities.

- Home office: Working from home a few days a week may be more plausible when nearing retirement, as it will be a smoother transi-

tion from heading to the office each day to spending more time at home. Turn a bedroom or den into an office space with a new desk and bookshelves.

An empty nest can be a bittersweet experience, but parents can make such situations work for them by transforming their homes to better reflect their current needs.

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Water features offer multitude of benefits to garden landscapes

METRO SERVICES

Many homeowners aspire to make their homes appear as beautiful and welcoming as possible. Exterior renovations may be high on homeowners' to-do lists, and landscaping is oftentimes a key component of those projects.

When planning gardens, homeowners may benefit by considering more than just flowers and shrubs while giving thought to other elements that can breathe vitality into their landscape designs. Water features can do just that, as such features provide more than just visual appeal.

- Aesthetic appeal: Water elements stand out against the greenery and foliage and can be used to

create focal points around the garden or yard. A single fountain can draw the eye, while a trickling stream or waterfall can deliver water to various spots in the landscape.

- Soothing sound: Rain drops on a rooftop or waves lapping on a shoreline elicit feelings of harmony and relaxation. Water features can bring that gentle sound close to home, further enhancing the ambiance.

- Brings texture: Water has its own unique and fluid texture that can provide stark contrast to blades of grass or the hard lines of architectural elements, such as pergolas or retaining walls. A pond or fountain can soften lines.

- Enhance the natural ecosystem: Water features can attract wildlife to a property. Birds may visit to take a quick sip, and dragonflies are sure to dart and hover over the shimmering ripples. Inviting natural wildlife to the yard can add hours of entertainment by enjoying the animals and insects.

- Remedy problem areas: Rather than fighting with the landscape, homeowners can adapt it. An area of the yard prone to soggy conditions or flooding can be transformed into a pond or waterfall to work with natural surroundings.

- Foster a passion: Many people turn to water features so they can explore the hobby of nurturing an

outdoor aquarium. Koi ponds are relatively easy to install and maintain, and the vibrant fish add visual appeal.

- Add a personal touch: Water features are as unique as the homeowners who create them. To set landscaping apart from neighbors' homes, homeowners can add fountains, ponds or flowing water elements to their properties. Decorative water features also can be melded with pools and spas to help these manmade recreational areas seem like they were carved right out of the natural landscape.

Water features can take landscapes to the next level with sounds, texture, movement, and beauty.

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Plumbing problems can lead to costly fixes

METRO SERVICES

No homeowner wants to be confronted with plumbing problems, which many associate with costly repairs and water damage. But many plumbing problems are preventable if homeowners take the time to learn about them and make the effort to nip them in the bud before they become something major.

- Clogged kitchen sink: Kitchen sinks get used quite a bit in the average home, and what makes its way down the sinks can contribute to plumbing problems. Avoid pouring gravy, grease, cooking oil, or fat down the kitchen sink, as these substances can cling to the pipes and lead to a backed up sink and a messy situation. Discard thick liquids and sauces in the trash can instead of the sink. Periodically turn the faucet on as hot as it can go and run it for a few minutes to dislodge anything that might have stuck to the pipes.

- Clogged shower drain: The pipes in the shower/bathtub can easily become clogged as well. Hair is the main culprit when shower drains get clogged, so install hair traps that catch any hair you and oth-

ers might shed while they are bathing. Instruct each person to remove their hair from the drain upon getting out of the shower. If you suspect the drain might already be on its way to clogging, use a wet/dry vac to remove any hair that might have started piling up in the pipes.

- Washing machines: Few homeowners think to periodically inspect their washing machines, but normal wear and tear on washing machine hoses can gradually build up, potentially leading to flooding if left unchecked. Periodically inspect hoses for cracks and other damage, replacing them if they look especially vulnerable.

- Water heater: Water heaters also can produce plumbing problems if homeowners don't keep an eye on them. Rusty tank fittings on water heaters are a warning sign that the heater might need some repairs. When left unchecked, water heaters can cause flooding that produces significant water damage, and water heaters may even need to be replaced, which can be very expensive. If you detect any problems with your heater, call in a plumber to confirm if anything is awry and address the problem.

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Home sales fall, prices strong

NEWS RELEASE

Home sales in Kentucky did not follow the national trend in March, as transactions in the state were down 6.8 percent for the month compared to March 2017 (4,576 in 2017 versus 4,262 in 2018). Nationally, sales rose 1.1 percent. Even with the drop of 314 total sales, March 2018 was still the second highest on record, just edging out March 2006 when 4,106 homes were sold. Total homes sold for the month were up 36 percent over the previous month.

For the first quarter of 2018 sales ended down 3.7 percent, with 10,419 homes sold in 2018 compared to 10,821 homes sold in the first three months of 2017, a difference of 402 transactions.

“The housing market is still really strong,” said Steve

Cline, 2018 president of Kentucky Realtors. “Last year was a record breaking year in homes sold and home prices. This year, we had to endure unseasonably cold weather through the latter part of the quarter, which may have negatively affected the market. The spring and early summer months will be telling as to how the rest of 2018 will look.”

Lawrence Yun, National Association of Realtors chief economist, says that while the healthy economy is generating sustained interest in buying a home this spring, sales are lagging levels from one year ago due to low supply and home prices keep climbing above what some would-be buyers can afford. On the national level, median home prices are north of \$250,000, however, that is

not the case in Kentucky.

Home prices in the state reached a median of \$132,290 in March, an 11.5 percent increase over March 2017 and 10.7 percent over the previous month. March's median price is the fifth highest on record, but is still just over half of the median for the country.


The months ahead are traditionally the peak for home sales and Kentucky has seen a slight decline in housing inventory to this point in the year, with 3.8 months of supply for March – a decrease of 5 percent over last year and down 2.1 percent, to 4.7 months, for the quarter.

Because of the tight supply, days on market also saw a decline, falling to 120 days in March which is down 4.8 percent over last March. For the quarter, homes closed 4

days faster, hitting 122 days in 2018.

“I'm optimistic about the real estate market because we have a strong economy,” said Cline. “We are at a place where both state and national unemployment is near record lows and the environment is stable for home purchases. Certainly, we could use more inventory to meet demand as activity is picking up with the warmer weather, but overall it should be another strong year.”

Nationally, the momentum is swinging toward home ownership. In 2017, the homeownership rate rose for the first time in 13 years and the first quarter of 2018 marked the fifth consecutive quarter where the homeownership rate rose from the prior year, jumping almost 1 percent to 64.3 percent.



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Earthworms can be boon to landscapes

METRO SERVICES

Gardeners eager to revitalize their lawns and gardens may spend hundreds of dollars on tools and products designed to improve soil and growing conditions. Although many of these items can be advantageous, gardeners also may want to look to nature's best garden helpers: earthworms.

It is believed that nearly 3,000 different types of earthworms inhabit the planet. Worms have been around for hundreds of millions of years.

Worms can be seen as bait dangling on fishing lines or as meals for red-breasted robins. But these subterranean dwellers play their biggest role beneath the soil.

Earthworms move through dirt as they search for food. The worms consume particles in the soil, helping to recycle materials like dead leaves, plant parts, decaying animals, and feces. Through their travels, worms also serve to aerate the soil. Worms bring the subsoil closer to the surface and mix it with the topsoil. Earthworms' castings also help naturally fertilize the areas in which they reside. The slimy mucus that worms leave be-

hind contains nitrogen, which also helps to amend the soil.

The University of Illinois Extension says most earthworms found, particularly in North America, can only grow so long, even though some worms seem like they stretch forever underneath the ground. Depending on the type of worm and how many segments it has, as well as its age and ability to get nutritious foods, worms typically reach only a few inches in length, offers National Geographic. There are some anomalies, however. The Oregon giant earthworm is one of the largest earthworms found in North America, growing to more than three feet in length. That worm is very rare, however. In 2016, a 16-inch-long earthworm was discovered in England and became part of the collection at the Natural History Museum in London.

Worms need the correct mix of oxygen, moisture and favorable temperatures to survive. If they do not have these components, they will seek them out elsewhere.

Because of the many benefits earthworms provide, they can be a boon to landscapes.

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Prepare for elder guests

METRO SERVICES

Homeowners may find themselves hosting senior guests several times throughout a typical year. These occasions can be wonderful opportunities for making memories, but homeowners may need to take certain precautions to ensure that guests are safe and comfortable. This may involve making some minor modifications around the home.

Mobility and comfort needs for seniors may differ those necessary to accommodate other guests. Meeting the needs of senior guests may involve any of the following.

- Make sure pathways leading to and from the home are level, cleared and easy to see.
- If possible, add a ramp over stairs that lead to the front door. Ensure handrails are sturdy.
- Remove clutter and excess furniture if a guest visiting will be using a walker or a manual/motorized wheelchair.
- Remove accent rugs from a home, and be sure that any mats are secured with nonslip material.
- Increase lighting in entryways, staircases and hallways, especially areas leading to kitchens or bathrooms.
- If guests will be staying overnight, arrange sleeping accommodations on the first floor and/or in a room closest to the bathroom.
- Well-placed grab bars in the bathroom can be an asset. See if you can borrow a portable shower seat to make bathing or showering easier for overnight senior guests.
- For long-term guests, consider replacing round doorknobs and other pulls with lever-action ones that are easy to grab.
- Concessions may need to be made concerning interior temperature, noise levels and television viewing.

Several easy modifications can be made to make senior guests feel comfortable when visiting others.

Laundry room renovation ideas made simple

METRO SERVICES

To former apartment dwellers or those who have never enjoyed the benefit of a dedicated laundry area, even the smallest washer and dryer space can seem like a luxury.

The benefits of dedicated laundry rooms abound. However, disorganized laundry rooms can nullify such benefits. Depending on the needs and preferences of each homeowner, laundry room designs can be customized for convenience.

- Employ vertical space: Floor space may be at a premium in a laundry room, especially for those who want to devote as much space as possible to bulk-size washer and dryer units. Therefore, utilizing wall space is key. Use shelving, wire racks, hooks, and other organizational tools to store items on the wall. Shelves can be tucked into just about any space, and there are different options that can fit into corners or shallow areas. These are a great option for keeping detergent or other laundry essentials nearby.
- Clean designs reduce clutter: Simple, clean designs can be an asset in a laundry room. If budget and space permits, cabinetry built into the design will help keep items out of sight in the laundry room. Cabinets hung directly above the appliances can store detergent, bleach and fabric softener. Use cabinets elsewhere in the room as catch-alls for cleaning supplies used in various other rooms around the house.
- Incorporate a sink in the design: Some older laundry room setups have a

slop sink to drain discharged water from the washing machine. However, newer homes may have plumbing installed directly through the floor or walls. It is still a worthwhile idea to have a sink in the laundry room for rinsing out stains, hand-washing items and having a go-to sink for messier cleanup.

- Utilize a tension rod: A rod installed between two cabinets or across a narrow width of space in the laundry room is a handy spot to hang shirts or pants to prevent wrinkling. Repurposing a ladder and suspending it from the ceiling also creates a spot to hang clothes.
- Consider laundry room



The benefits of dedicated laundry rooms abound, but disorganized laundry rooms can nullify such benefits.

flooring: It's important to select flooring materials that will not be damaged by contact with moisture or spills. Vinyl, tile and some composite products often

make good laundry room floor materials. Resilient flooring that mimics the look of hardwood may add a classy touch, and give the appearance of wood without having to worry about damage. To alleviate fatigue while spending long moments in the laundry room, invest in a memory foam mat that can be placed underfoot.

- Keep lighting in mind: Lighting can be important in the laundry room. Rely on task lighting, under-cabinet strip lighting and overhead lights as needed for efficiency.

Laundry room design can maximize the space available and make it more convenient to launder and sort clothes.

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Michael and Jackie Wood spent two years turning a home in disrepair on Levias Road into a 3,200-square-foot dream home. A series of photos (starting at top) show the home before and after, including the kitchen, bathroom and rear of the house. Below, after the remodel, (from top) a custom-designed metal railing stands around the basement steps that emerged from the remodel, the dining room allows the family of five to sit together for meals and a basement bathroom has a kid-friendly design for the couple's three young children.

FIXER

Continued from Page 1B

time – began the project, serving as general contractors, laborers and consultants.

After Michael finished a shift as an electrician at a Calvert City plant, he would spend several hours on the house before catching a short night's sleep – nearly every day for 24 months.

“Our friends stopped asking us to do things. We didn't go on vacation; all we did was work on the house,” Jackie said.

And they worked on it in every sense of the word. They built a two-car garage, framing and raising the walls on their own. They even hung the trusses with the help of a front-end loader. They knocked down walls, relocated the front door, ripped up tile, installed new heating and air and electrical and laid the decking for a new roof.

The only thing the two didn't do was finish the roof and hang the gutters.

Once the basement was dry, they stained the concrete, hung dry wall and painted to create a family room, three bedrooms and a full bath in an area that once looked more like a pond filled with floating abandoned baby toys and personal items from the previous owner.

Achieving the vision they and to double the square footage took time, but now they have a modern ranch style home and countless stories about the trials and tribulations of an amazing renovation.

“I was reluctant in the beginning; he had to convince me,” Jackie said about the project.

They used a blow torch to heat up the tile floor throughout the main level before it could be scraped up.

“There was no duct work in the basement, and we had to use acid and special cleaners and wear respira-

tors to clean the basement floor before we stained it,” Michael explains. “And we moved the laundry room upstairs, built a 40-foot deck out back and added a front porch.”

Virtually no stone was left unturned, and the couple takes pride in their labor. While Michael was at his job, Jackie was laying a good portion of the three-quarter-inch, hand-scraped birch hardwood throughout the main floor.

It helps that Michael has the skill and willingness to tackle any project, including a walk-in tile shower with concrete seat, poured concrete counter tops and a new kitchen table top made from reclaimed wood from a train car floor that Jackie bought at a Paducah salvage store.

Michael's step-father, Pat Guess, a pipefitter, custom designed a metal railing around the exposed basement steps that emerged from the remodel. The painted black metal rails give the entrance a modern vibe.

“I can't say enough about Fredonia Valley Bank,” Jackie said. “It took us a lot longer than a year, but they would come out periodically to see that we were making progress. It did take us about two years.”

What advice would they give other couples considering flipping a house or hand-crafting a dream home?

Have patience, Jackie says.

Michael agrees, but also says to add a 10-percent contingency to materials. Otherwise, you might be shocked in the long run.

Technology played a big role in Michael's ability to meet the job's required skill set, he said.

“I looked up how to do everything. A lot was on YouTube, so there was really no reason we couldn't do it ourselves,” he said. “I looked up the building code on a lot of things. Used Google a lot.”



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Availability
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Free dump days next week
The county has free dumping days each year in the spring and autumn. The next dump days will be this autumn. The center will accept items like furniture, appliances and a variety of other items at no charge. Every-day trash is not included for free. Other restrictions apply.

Recycling
Bins are available for paper, cardboard, glass, steel/aluminum and plastics Nos. 1 and 2. Electronics may be recycled, but there is a fee for disposal. There is also a mobile recycling bin taken to communities in the county.

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New Ky. law makes calling 811 before dig more critical

NEWS RELEASE

With the arrival of warm weather, homeowners, contractors and others are getting outside to work on projects that have been on hold through the winter. This increase in excavation activity is usually accompanied by an increase in the number of incidents of damage to underground utility facilities.

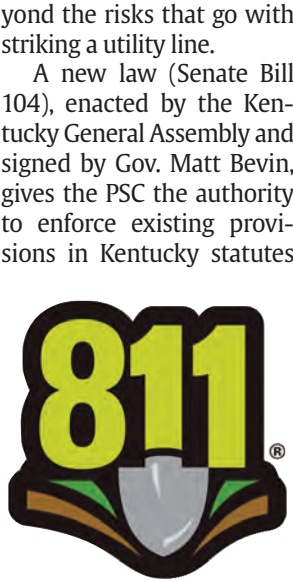
The Kentucky Public Service Commission (PSC) is joining with the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners and utility regulators across the country to remind anyone planning a project involving excavation to call 811 before beginning work.

“Striking a utility line while digging not only causes damage and disrupts service, but it also can pose a danger of severe injury or even death,” PSC Chairman Michael Schmitt said. “Hitting a natural gas line can cause a fire or an explosion, while digging into a power cable can lead to electrocution.”

Like every other state, Kentucky has a statewide 811 service that, by law, should be called at least two days prior to beginning excavation. That will allow ample time for utility lines to be located and marked so that excavation can proceed safely.

Natural gas providers are required to provide the location of their lines to the 811 center. Most electric utilities, larger water providers and telecommunication companies also provide location data to 811, but, in some cases, it also may be necessary to contact a local utility service provider directly.

Beginning in mid-July, failing to call 811 in Kentucky may have consequences be-



Know what's below.
Call before you dig.

yond the risks that go with striking a utility line.

A new law (Senate Bill 104), enacted by the Kentucky General Assembly and signed by Gov. Matt Bevin, gives the PSC the authority to enforce existing provisions in Kentucky statutes that are intended to protect natural gas and hazardous liquids pipelines. The PSC will investigate incidents of damage to pipelines to determine whether a location request to 811 was made in a timely manner, whether the pipeline was located accurately and properly, and whether the excavation was conducted safely.

Excavators, including homeowners, could be penalized for not calling 811 or for ignoring location markers. Utilities could be penalized for not responding to requests to locate lines or for improperly or inaccurately locating or marking underground facilities.

Penalties are up to \$1,250 for a first violation, \$3,000 for a second and \$5,000 for subsequent violations

“Not every incident in which a gas line is hit will result in a violation being issued and a penalty assessed, especially if 811 has been called,” said John Lyons, director of the PSC division of Inspections, which will in-

vestigate incidents. “However, a failure to call 811 is much more likely to trigger an enforcement action.”

In 2017, there were more than 1,200 incidents in Kentucky in which a gas line was damaged during an excavation.

A PSC review of a sampling of the damage reports indicates that:

- Contractors and other professional excavators were responsible for 85 percent of the incidents, with water and sewer line repairs, building construction, swimming pool installation, and irrigation system installation among the most common causes.
- About 60 percent of the excavators who hit natural gas lines called 811 before digging.
- Homeowners accounted for the remaining 15 percent of incidents. The most common causes were installation of mailboxes or fencing, landscaping and water or sewer line repairs.
- Only about 27 percent of those landowners called 811 before beginning work.

PSC Chairman Schmitt said that the stepped-up enforcement of the call-before-you-dig statutes and regulations reflects a greater emphasis nationally and at the state level on pipeline safety.

“This new law brings Kentucky into line with tougher federal standards, which the PSC enforces under an agreement with the US Department of Transportation,” he said. “More importantly, it is an effort to significantly improve public safety by reducing the unacceptably high number of dangerous dig-in incidents involving natural gas pipelines.”

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NAHB RELEASE

There are thousands of legitimate, ethical contractors in business around the country. Unfortunately, there are also scam artists looking to cheat you out of your money who pose as legitimate contractors. These "fly-by-night" operators often show up in communities impacted by natural disasters to try to scam distressed home owners into paying for shoddy repairs or work that they will never show up to perform.

Here are some warning signs to look out for:

- Doesn't have license and insurance. All professional contractors should be insured and able to show their certificate proving such insurance. Although all states do not require licensing, contractors in states requiring licenses should have it and be able to provide a copy.
- Asks you to sign anything before you've hired them. If they want you to sign an "estimate" or "authorization" before you've made the decision to hire the contractor, look out. They may be trying to get you to sign what is an actual binding contract.
- Doesn't write contracts. Professionals have clear contracts that outline the job, process, the cost, and helps clarify how problems will be managed. If you don't have a

contract, you are not protected when something goes wrong. Don't hire anyone who tells you a contract "won't be necessary."

- Requires cash or payment in full before starting the job. Shady contractors demand cash and then run with the money. Many home owners have been stranded by paying in full up front. A deposit towards materials is common, but only pay it once you have a contract signed by both you and the contractor. It's also suspect you're asked to pay cash to a salesperson instead of a check or money order to a company.
- Vastly underbids all other contractors. They may have the best price, but that doesn't guarantee the best work. Such contractors may cut costs on quality, which can end up costing you more when you have to have the substandard work redone.
- Offers "special" pricing. If you're told you've been "chosen" as a demonstration project at a special, low price, or you're told a low price is good only if you sign a contract today.
- Cannot provide customer references. Professional contractors should have current references they can provide from current and past clients — and you should be able to reach those references, not just an answering machine.

- Difficulty contacting the contractor. Professionals have a physical office, mailing address, phone, and email. They should respond to your queries in a timely manner. Make sure you can verify the contractor's business address. If they only have a P.O. box, be wary.
- Tells you to obtain the building or remodeling permits. Professional contractors go to the county or state offices and get permits for their work themselves. Asking the home owner to do it is a sign that they are not a legitimate contractor.


Your best bet is to take your time, do your research and choose someone you feel completely comfortable with. If your state requires contractors to be licensed, look them up on the state licensing website even if you've seen a piece of paper that looks like a license. Make sure they don't have a record of consumer complaints lodged with your local Better Business Bureau.

You can also find your local home builders association and contact Three Rivers Home Builders Association at (270) 871-1145 for a list of reputable contractors in the area. Or you may search the National Association of Home Builders' Directory of Professional Remodelers to find a NAHB Remodelers member in the community.

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Most remodeling not recovered in resale

METRO SERVICES

Of the 29 projects it studied for its 2017 "Cost vs. Value Report," Remodeling magazine found that the average payback in resale value was 64.3 cents.

The lone project in the 2017 report to return a higher value than its cost was installation of loose-fill insulation in an attic, which provided a return of 107.7 percent. Homeowners who replaced an existing entry door with a 20-gauge steel unit recouped 90.7 percent of their investment at resale, placing that project second on the list.

What helps homeowners who finance such projects re-

coup their associated costs is the relatively low sticker price of the projects.

But a recovering real estate market has helped homeowners recoup more of their investments on some expensive projects as well. For example, the 2017 report saw the biggest year-over-year percentage increases in value on expensive projects like upscale bathroom remodels, upscale master suites, two-story additions, grand entrance installations, and family room additions. The increase in value on those projects ranged from 5.6 percent to 7.4 percent from a year earlier.

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