

comfortable

The Hawk Eye

# Life Styles

OCT / NOV 2018

## Autumn Home Issue

**Get Your Home  
Ready for Winter**

**Tips for Planting  
a Fall Garden**

**Refresh Your  
Kitchen Cabinets**

*Design and Build  
Your New Home  
with Mike Crowner of*

**Midwest  
Realty Group**





# Point-and-click home design a reality

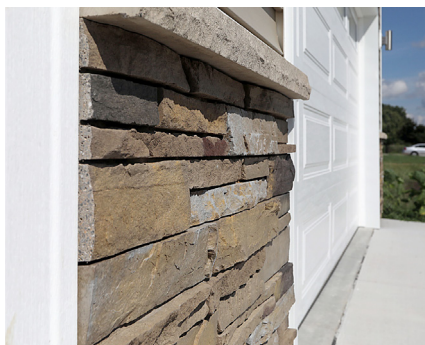
**Midwest Realty Group helps you design, build a new home to your specifications.**



*Story by Bob Saar  
Photos by John Lovretta*

Buying a new home shouldn't be like going to a car lot to pick out an existing unit with existing features.

You need and want choices. And you deserve them. After all, buying a house is the biggest purchase most Americans make in their lives.



You want to choose the flooring, the wall coverings, the bathroom fixtures. You want the kitchen to be your kitchen, not someone else's idea of a kitchen.

Midwest Realty Group formed in 2014 to specialize in development, consulting, and risk analysis of all types of real estate, and to simplify the process of designing and building a new home.

"A lot of people don't know where to start," said Ryan Nagrocki, president of Midwest Realty Group. "Do I call a contractor? If I do, the contractor most of the time takes them store-to-store to pick out cabinets, to pick out a flooring and fixtures."

In other words, you get run all over town looking at components for your dream home, but you can't see them in

conjunction with each other until the home is finished.

"What I'm trying to do is simplify the process," Nagrocki said. "There is no need to coordinate with big box stores, as we are open when your schedule allows, to make the building process an enjoyable experience."

The solution is to design your own pre-built home.

Pre-built, or modular homes, are constructed in sections in a climate-controlled manufacturing environment, unexposed to negative weather conditions as with an on-site, or stick-built structure. Individual sections are built in the factory and checked after every step. Finished modules are transported to the customer's building site to be joined and finished by local plumbers, electricians and drywallers on the pre-





*Above: The kitchen in the finished one of two show homes at Westfield Estates, a project of the Midwest Realty Group. Above right: Countertops in the finished kitchen.*

built foundation.

"I use the term 'system-built homes.' They're homes built with the same quality, if not better, than what are built on-site," Nagrocki said.

System-built homes are often held to a higher building code than local building codes. All Midwest Realty homes are built to meet the international building code and state building codes.

Nagrocki and his partner Mike

Crowner said they're creating a sales area in a model home where customers can watch their ideas develop on a big screen TV using the architectural home design software, Chief Architect, to create a 360° panorama rendering and full 3D view of their dream home.

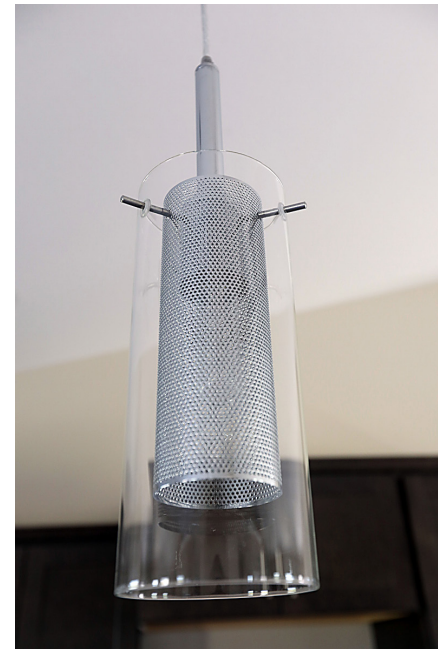
"We'll be able to custom-draw the floorplan and 3D image it," Nagrocki said. "We can draw this house, then I can pull this kitchen up and we'll be able to look at it. You'll be able to say, 'I don't like dark cabinets, I want white cabinets,' so I click and boom: there it is."

Chief Architect incorporates automated building tools for home design, interior design, and kitchen and bath design to create construction drawings, elevations, CAD details and 3D models.

All of this takes place at Westfield Estates, a 14-lot subdivision on Layne Drive behind the Shottenkirk Superstore in West Burlington. They also has move-in-ready homes and sites ready to build on at Westfield Estates.

"We are fortunate to be authorized builders for two different system-built home companies: Ritz-Craft Custom Homes and Stratford Custom Homes," Nagrocki said.

Ritz-Craft is the largest family



owned, off-site built modular home manufacturer in the United States. Stratford has been providing custom-built homes using modular construction techniques since 1973.

"Partnering with Ritz-Craft and Stratford provides us with their years of experience, and that provides consistent quality craftsmanship, quality control through numerous inspections, precision engineering, and energy-efficient buildings," Nagrocki said. "All of this helps save the client time and

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money with less waste and a faster building time."

Here's how it works, from beginning to end:

You meet with a Midwest Realty representative in a model home and, using Chief Architect, begin with a basic floor plan, then tweak it into something you want to build and live in. If you've ever shopped clothing online, where you can click and change the color of a dress instead of trying to imagine it by looking at a swatch, that's what it's like to design your custom home using software.

"Out in our garage of the model home, we'll have all the samples, and you'll be able to pick out all your cabinets, your doors, your trim," Nagrocki said.

Once you have your floor plan designed, it goes to Ritz-Craft or Stratford and construction of the modules, or pods, begins.

"It's pre-built: your floor system, the walls, everything," Nagrocki said.

Meanwhile, your basement and foundation are installed on-site and the mechanicals readied — electrical, sewer and water.

"The pods all sit on a full, nine-foot basement," Nagrocki said.

Your home arrives as several pods; they are set in place with a crane, joined together, and everything is connected and finished.

"You shorten up the construction



timeframe significantly, versus an on-site built home," Nagrocki said. "We're not having to chase people around because a lot of the plumbing and electrical is done in the manufacturing environment. You're not having to wait on your electrician or your plumber because that delays your insulation guy, and that delays your drywall guy, which then delays the guy who's putting the cabinets in."

The drywall can be working while the other contractors are working because HVAC and plumbing is all going into the basement.

"The plumbing and electrical is stubbed down; those guys have the whole basement to themselves while the drywalling and painting keeps go-

ing upstairs," he said. "They're not working on top of each other."

Midwest Realty has established relationships with local contractors to complete the final installation work, and Midwest tells the contractors where to install the mechanical fittings in the basement.

"When it shows up at the job site there are very few things — you still have to hire a plumber, you still have to hire an electrician, an HVAC guy — those mechanicals all need to be attached, but 80 percent of that work is done in the factory."

Nagrocki said typical turnaround time is three to four months from the contract signing.



*Aaron Lofthus works on finishing the basement as work continues in one of two show homes at Westfield Estates in West Burlington.*





*Jenny Lofthus paints trim as work continues in one of two show homes at Westfield Estates.*



Affordability is a big factor for most homeowners.

"Building a new home can be more affordable than a lot of people realize," Nagrocki said. "When we work with a client through the design process, we are able to give them an exact cost of building their home. Our process is more transparent through the budget phase. When building a home we can show you an itemized list of the options you have chosen to see what everything is going to cost. Changes can be simply

made to ensure you remain within your budget."

Nagrocki said there's a void in the single family home market in the 250-300 price point range.

"We're trying to meet that. We're also trying to build a product that's a little bit different, not as traditional," he said as he pointed out features in the Westfield model home. "We've got a lot of different options available. In this house, we'll get it furnished and staged, and we'll have the garage set up as a showroom. It's going to be a one-stop shop."

He said Midwest Realty can build a custom-designed home anywhere for customers who don't want to build at Westfield.

"We are able to build a home for anyone in the tri-state area, whether it is located at our development or someone else's," he said.

After looking through Midwest's collection of various modular homes, from ranch style, two-story, and lodge style homes, perhaps you decide you want a combination of all those styles.

Nagrocki said that's no problem.

"We handle the building process from start to finish to ensure a quality home is built," he said.

Westfield Estates is located on Layne Drive in West Burlington. Hours are 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily. Call 319-759-2862 for more information.

Read more about Midwest Realty Group and Westfield Estates at [www.midwestrealtygroupinc.com](http://www.midwestrealtygroupinc.com) or find them on Facebook.

You can download a demo version of Chief Architect, or watch a time-lapse 3D design from start to finish, online at [www.chiefarchitect.com](http://www.chiefarchitect.com).

