

TEEN GIRLS AND SEX • QUICK FAMILY MEALS • SHAKESPEARE'S KING JOHN

# NORTHSHORE

CHICAGO'S GUIDE TO FINE LIVING

WWW.NORTHSHOREMAG.COM • MARCH 2004 \$3.00

## HOMES

GORGEOUS GEORGIAN  
DOWNSIZING  
MUD & LAUNDRY ROOMS



7 25274 11794 9

# Washing Up

Laundry and mudrooms are becoming spectacular areas in the home — and improving house values

BY BARBARA BALLINGER AND LISA SKOLNIK





Photography by Henrich-Blessing, courtesy of Orren Pickell Designers & Builders

In the past, mudrooms and laundry rooms rarely got respect. Relegated to a small space off the kitchen or in the basement, seldom decorated beyond a few hooks or clothing pegs, these secondary rooms were rarely thought of as places to renovate. But today, as houses keep increasing in size, mudrooms and laundry rooms are becoming integral parts of home design.

Mudrooms have been outfitted with computers, work stations, craft centers and extra freezers, notes Michael Klein, president and CEO of Airoom

Architects & Builders in Lincolnwood. Laundry rooms have come out of the lower depths of our homes and now have tons of space for storage and drying. Sometimes they are merged with mudrooms on the first floor, or they may be located right near the bedrooms.

Wendy Cohen, vice president of sales and marketing for Orren Pickell Designers and Builders of Bannockburn, refers to the laundry room in her own custom Riverwoods home as "the family workshop." The 14-by-16-foot room, which is located between the garage, kitchen and a foyer to the front door, has triple windows so she and her husband can watch their three children play outdoors or get off their school bus. It also includes a computer station, lockers and mail slots for family members, a place to stash keys, a dry-

cleaning bin, a gift-wrap center with fold-out table, a bulletin board to track activities, a counter for folding laundry, a sink for washing delicates by hand, labeled cabinets for supplies, an ironing center and file drawers to organize bills. The room has become so popular that family members often congregate there, much to Cohen's surprise. "It was supposed to be just my room," she says.

Mudrooms are equally well turned out these days. As busy families, we need space for all the hockey sticks, skis, racquets, balls, body pads and uniforms, says Klein. Sarah Susanka, architect and author of *The Not So Big House* (Taunton Press), points out that "the snazziest mudrooms rival laundry rooms for unique features, such as raised grilles to drip-dry boots, radiant floor heating, a sink to wash up and maybe a second one to pot



**“Another reason that the laundry and mudroom are located in more accessible, visible spots is that their components — equipment, a sink, cabinetry and bench — have become better looking.”**

—Don Van Cura, owner of Chicago construction company Don Van Cura Construction Co., Inc.

plants, a fireplace and a family information center to leave messages and hang keys.”

Although these new types of mud and laundry rooms are a standard in most new residences, those with older homes can give their tired versions major makeovers or combine the two rooms and discover the advantages of having these two spaces in close proximity. Soiled clothes, dirt-encrusted kids and pets need never muck up the home again, which explains why many laundry and

mudrooms also incorporate half- or full-sized bathrooms, or at least have them close by.

Historically, these were humble spaces. The mudroom was the place where rural family members took off muddy boots so they wouldn't dirty the rest of the house, says Clifford Edward Clark, professor of history and American studies at Carleton College in Northfield, Minn., and author of *American Family Home, 1800-1960* (University of North Carolina Press). The

“summer kitchen” on the back porch of many Victorian houses served a similar function, Clark says.

Laundry rooms moved into the house from the back porch with the advent of indoor plumbing. They were situated in basements for several reasons: The pipes were easier to tap into there, the wringer on the washer dripped and there was space to hang clothes to dry when it was rainy outside. They stayed downstairs until the 1970s



## STANDING THE TEST OF TIME.

From walkways to swimming pools, from patios to driveways, Classic Stone Pavers are a durable, natural and versatile paving stone from the walkways of old Europe.

Hinsdale, Illinois • Naples, Florida



Classic Stone Pavers are available in a variety of finishes, colors and sizes for any landscape. Call us at (888) 602-0100 to request samples and discuss design ideas, or visit [www.classicstonepavers.com](http://www.classicstonepavers.com)

*Classic*  
STONE PAVERS

(888) 602-0100

## (((END THE PAIN)))

### Support the Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy Fundraiser

A painful, debilitating, incurable disease that can be initiated by the slightest trauma to the body---there are an estimated 4.5 million undiagnosed cases in the U.S. Someone you know could have R.S.D

**Sponsored by Highland Park Hospital Health & Fitness Center**

**April 24, 2004 6:30 PM at the Cubby Bear North**

Speaker: *Dr. Norman Harden*, Dir. Center for Pain Studies, Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago

*Dinner, raffle, silent auction and dancing with music by the Sunspots*

*Tickets: \$40 if purchased by April 15; \$50 at the door : 21661 N. Milwaukee, Lincolnshire*

*RSVP to RSD: PO Box 7164 Deerfield, IL 60015 For more info contact: [helth1@core.com](mailto:helth1@core.com)*

when working women started complaining about the inconvenience of hauling clothes down to the basement and then back upstairs. Then architects put washers and dryers in closets or hallways off the kitchen or garage to eliminate the trek downstairs.

But as higher-end, pricier houses got bigger, families found they had more "stuff" to stash; lower interest rates also fueled a demand for home improvement. Hence the rebirth of the mudroom and laundry room.

Just how desirable are these rooms? Very. When the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) in Washington, D.C., asked homeowners two years ago to rate the popularity of 92 features in their home, they put a nice laundry room at the top of the list for the first time, followed by a dining room, home office, den or library and soundproofing, says Gopal Ahluwalia, vice-president of research. Builder Klein says it's not unusual for these rooms to be the same size as a bedroom. "A good-sized version used to be 5 feet by 8 feet, but now they're often 12 feet by 15 feet or more," he says.

The changes don't mean we've become a nation of neatniks to rival Felix Unger of the *Odd Couple*. But we do a lot of laundry — about 35 billion loads annually, which is more than 100 million tons and 300 times the Empire State Building's weight, says a spokesperson for Lowe's Home Improvement Warehouse in North Wilkesboro, N.C. And we do have more stuff to store than ever before.

Charles Jones, vice president for global consumer design at Whirlpool Corp. in Benton Harbor, Mich., says more homeowners simply view these rooms as an extension of their living space because they are spending more time in their homes.

Another reason that the laundry and mudroom are located in more

## The new interest in mud and laundry rooms has spurred manufacturers, home design centers, organizational experts and design professionals to offer help.

accessible, visible spots is that their components — equipment, a sink, cabinetry and bench — have become better looking. In the case of the washer and dryer, they're also quieter, says Don Van Cura, owner of Chicago construction company Don Van Cura Construction Co., Inc.

Just how nice and how big the rooms get runs a wide gamut.

Concord Homes in Palatine, which builds single-family homes starting at \$190,000, moved its laundry to a second floor in its smaller homes. These rooms usually measure 1,800 to 2,500 square feet, says Roger Mankedick, executive vice president. Concord's more expensive homes offer a "super" laundry by the garage.

At the higher end, Orren Pickell, a custom home builder whose prices run from \$600,000 to \$1 million and up, designed its laundry and mudrooms to evoke "oohs and aahs." Its more modest examples feature a big sink, folding counter, built-in ironing board, shelves for supplies, baskets for dirty and clean clothing and good lighting in the laundry. The more fancy designs include a door to the outdoors, a window for a more room-like feeling, a chute to collect laundry from upstairs rooms, bins earmarked for individual family members' laundry, a bench for putting on or taking off boots, sneakers and other gear, and an area to pursue hobbies such as crafts, sewing or computer work.

Out-of-the-box solutions are also common these days. David Karlson of Karlson Kitchens in Evanston has had clients ask for a place to clean the family pet. Interior designer Kathy Taslitz remade the mudroom in her 1902 home into a double-duty space that accommodates sports gear, outerwear and school books, plus wet suits and towels when the family uses the backyard swimming pool. She refurbished existing storage and installed a full bathroom in the space.

Many newly improved laundries and mudrooms end up including so many functions that their old nomenclature no longer seems to fit. Chicago designer Mick de Giulio, known best for remodeling



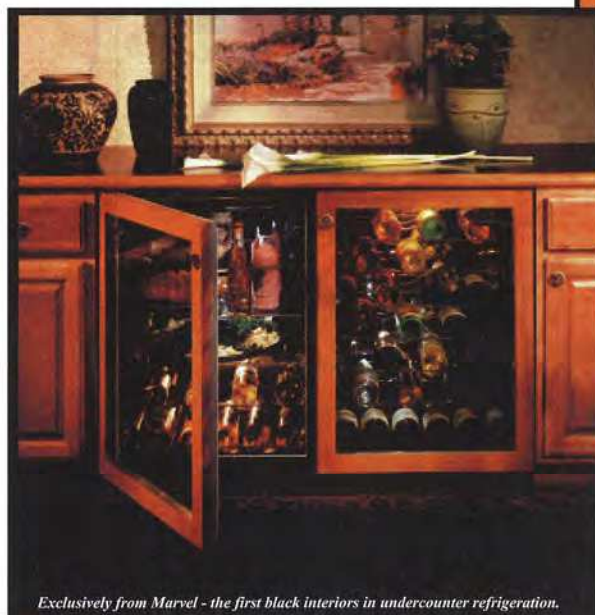
# *Life . Luxury . Marvel*



**Creating a truly unique and elegant look in wine and beverage refrigeration has never been easier. Tinted glass doors showcase a dramatic black interior that can be continuously illuminated. Custom wood overlay doors match your cabinetry for truly integrated luxury under-counter refrigeration.**

Call us today to locate an authorized Marvel Dealer near you:

**O'Rourke Sales Company • 3855 Elmore Avenue  
Davenport, IA 52807 • Ph. 800-277-7602 / 563-823-3503**



*Exclusively from Marvel - the first black interiors in undercounter refrigeration.*

## Four-legged.



Epoque cast iron bathtub by PORCHER

## Or best in show.



Marc Newson freestanding bathtub by PORCHER

## COMMUNITY

### HOME SUPPLY

Kitchens and bathrooms.  
Everyday and beyond.

3924 N. Lincoln Ave. | Chicago IL 60613  
Appointments Welcome: 773.281.7010  
[www.comhs.com](http://www.comhs.com)



kitchens from his Wilmette and Chicago offices, prefers to call the laundry "the new mudroom of the millennium."

Even in semi-custom and production houses, builders such as Town & Country Homes and Concord work one or both into their plans for several reasons. First, the increased size of garages has dictated the need for a transitional room connecting it to the house, says Mark Englund, president of LifeStyle HomeDesign, a mail-order home plans company in Des Moines, Iowa and Minneapolis.

Second, the bigger laundry rooms with more equipment and cabinetry mean less space for taking off shoes, hanging up coats and finding room for odd-and-end posses-

sions, says Ed Fitch, executive vice president of community planning and marketing at Town & Country Homes in Lombard.

Suburban homeowners Tiffany and Jeff Thoelecke want a mudroom at the front of their Glenview home, and to accommodate it they're going to borrow space from their family room. An existing mudroom at the back will become part of the kitchen. "The one we had didn't help, because the kids came in through the front. I had to stop them in their tracks before they got the house dirty," says Tiffany, who planned the work with David Karlson.

The new interest in mud and laundry rooms has spurred manufacturers, home

design centers, organizational experts and design professionals to offer help. Manufacturers have developed energy-efficient equipment with a larger front-loading capacity and more attractive looks, as well as additional products to make cleaning and organizing easier.

Whirlpool, for instance, developed a personal valet unit that eliminates the need to send some clothing to the dry cleaner because of its deep misting process. It also has a mini-jetted sink-tub to make hand washing easier, a "dry-aire" closet that dries delicate woolens and an ergonomically designed ironing station.

Organization experts such as California Closets of Wheeling, a franchise of the San Rafael-based company, advise homeowners how to make better use of their new spaces, says Stephanie Miller, senior design consultant. "We're putting more open shelves over washers and dryers, sometimes concealing equipment with doors, adding hanging sections for clothes when the wash comes out and baskets to sort it all," she says.

The company also is finding that consumers want the rooms designed with the same quality materials that they select for other rooms. Think high-pressure laminates, fancy flooring, wall and ceiling moldings and trims. Homeowners "don't want a lower grade and are also willing to wallpaper or paint rooms lively colors and add art," Miller says.

But no matter how big or attractive either the laundry or mudroom get, both need to remain functional. They should be easy to clean through a choice of practical yet attractive flooring such as limestone, ceramic tile or slate. Chicago architect Scott Rappe of Kuklinski + Rappe Architects likes to add a recessed sisal mat at a door to the outside to remove excess snow and mud. Other smart features include wipeable countertops, walls and cabi-

Find your *balance*  
in the world's cleanest garage.



GarageTek has created the dream garage for thousands of homeowners.



The day the training wheels come off. What a day for a child. And a parent, for that matter. GarageTek gives you back your garage for the more important things in life.

GarageTek is the world's cleanest garage. It gets the junk off the floor and organizes everything, transforming your garage into your ideal space.

**GARAGE  
TEK**  
The world's cleanest garage

We design it. We install it. You enjoy it.  
Call or click today for a free in-home consultation.



847-375-9266

[www.garagetek.com](http://www.garagetek.com)



**LAKE FOREST  
PLASTIC SURGERY**

O.P. Steinwald, MD, FACS  
Paul M. Steinwald, MD  
Board-Certified, American Board of Plastic Surgery

**The Best  
of Both Worlds...**

Facial/Eyelid Rejuvenation, Nasal Refinement  
Breast Enhancement/Reduction/Reconstruction  
Abdominoplasty, Liposuction, Collagen, Botox



700A N. Westmoreland Road, Lake Forest, IL

847-234-8330 | 847-234-9464

[www.lfplasticsurgery.com](http://www.lfplasticsurgery.com)

**ARA****Cabinets****4 U**

## Kitchen & Bath Studio

**Expert Design & Remodeling**Omega  
Cabinetry**ULTRACRAFT**  
Cabinets for the way you live™

### Granite Tops At Cost

With a March Purchase of a Complete Kitchen Installation. Excludes Previous Purchases and Other Offers.

**Offer Expires March 31st**

#### All Your Needs – Floor to Ceiling

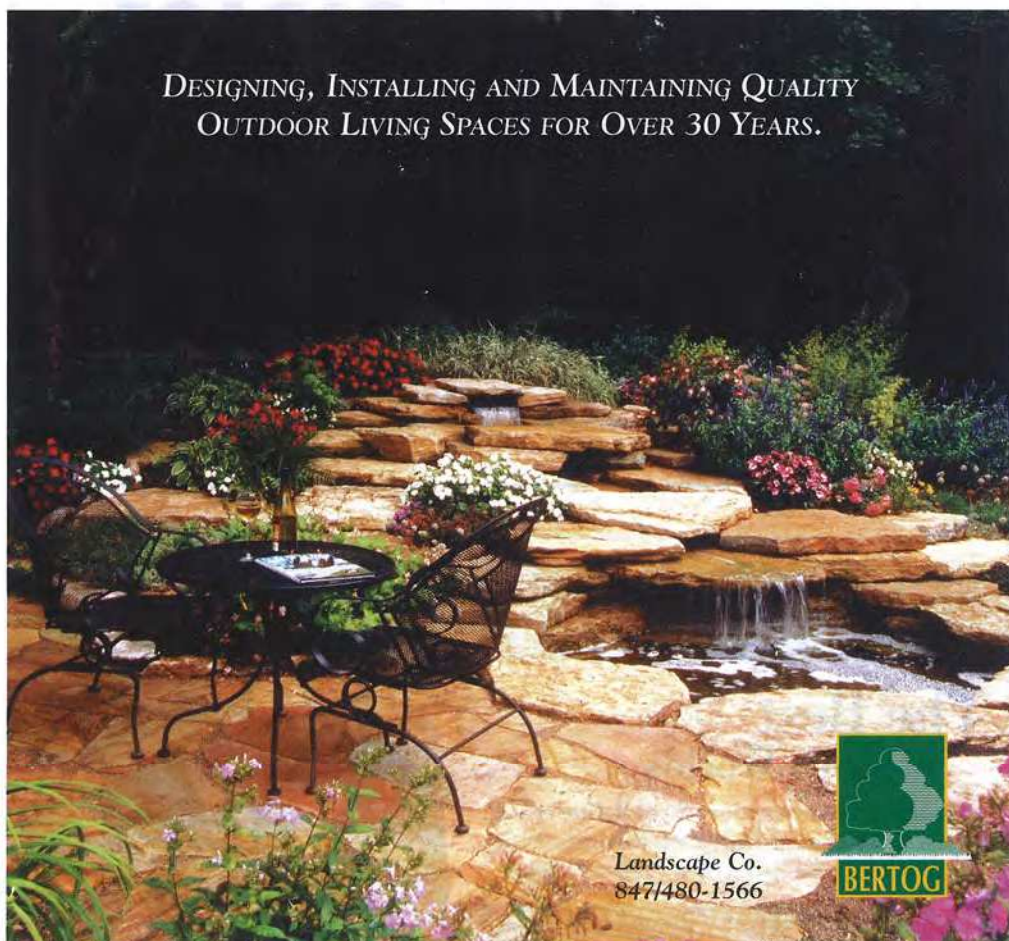
- Innovative Kitchens and Baths Designed for Your Lifestyle
- The Best Value • Expert Installation
- 2nd-Generation Business

**Consultations by Appointment  
in Your Home or Our Showroom****(847) 215-1700****Visit Our Beautiful Showroom**

SE Corner of Dundee & Milwaukee  
M Tu W Th 10–8 F Sat 10–5 Closed Sun



DESIGNING, INSTALLING AND MAINTAINING QUALITY  
OUTDOOR LIVING SPACES FOR OVER 30 YEARS.



Landscape Co.  
847/480-1566



netry. Good venting and drainage are essential, particularly for second-floor laundries, says Tony Perry, vice president at Orren Pickell.

Not surprisingly, these rooms run a wide range of prices. At the minimum, a small laundry without fancy cabinetry and tucked into a hallway or closet might be between \$2,500 and \$3,000.

At the opposite end, a room with elaborate cabinets and bells and whistles might cost as much as \$150,000, Perry says. The price tag of mudrooms can vary from \$25,000 to \$100,000, estimates architect Richard Ruvin with Weissmann Ruvin Design Partnership in Lake Forest.

Although both rooms have become increasingly popular, the payback for the long term still remains unclear, says Gwen Biasi, director of marketing at the National Association of the Remodeling Industry in Des Plaines. Her advice, which applies equally to many other home-improvement projects, is prudent: Watch your costs if you plan to sell your home within five years.

At the same time, builder Klein thinks the trend is nowhere near its peak, so improving or adding these rooms may become important to a family's lifestyle and the resale value of their home. "This is only the beginning. There's still a lot more we can do with these rooms," he says.

Such as? Klein says "they're becoming full activity rooms that can be segregated from all the other spaces on the main floor. Family members can all be doing different things at once without bothering each other. And that leaves basements for the fun stuff — home theaters, party rooms, spas, second kitchens and wine cellars. And lots more room for storage."

Clearly mud and laundry areas are no longer "second-class" rooms. They are becoming integral parts of the home. Must-have spaces. 