

# Summer 2021 CONCEPTS



## A YEAR OF UPS AND DOWNS



Lisa Pickell,  
President

What a rollercoaster! On the one hand, we're thrilled that it's been a year of growth. On the other hand, challenges with building materials and staffing have made things, shall we say, complicated.

To be completely transparent, we've spent a lot of last year apologizing for delays, usually caused by issues with the supply chain. As of today, material prices are beginning to normalize, but there are still delays with steel, appliances, shower doors, cabinets, carpeting, and more.

To address these challenges, we've adapted our processes. For example, we don't start remodeling projects until everything is on site. No one wants to tear out a functioning kitchen only to

learn that flooring is stuck overseas.

What's more, over the past few years I've noted that the pool of skilled construction professionals has been shrinking, and competition for talent has grown fierce. Fortunately, our culture and employee commitment means that when we find great people, we tend to win and keep them. Or, we're lucky enough to bring them back (see Tracie and Erik on the right).

Ultimately, I'm pleased to report that in spite of the challenging year, we remain healthy and continue to deliver amazing projects, thanks to our incredible clients, partners and team. I hope you enjoy seeing what we've been up to!

PS: I should mention that we have openings in the office and on site—send anyone you know to the Employment Opportunities page in the Contact Us section of [pickellbuilders.com](http://pickellbuilders.com).



This 5000+ sf Wisconsin lake home is one of several projects we have under construction and on the boards. See page 8 for a few more.

## WELCOME BACK . . . AND WELCOME

We're thrilled to welcome back Tracie Peck in customer service and Erik Swenson as a project manager and superintendent. Plus, welcome to the sales team, Anna Sorensen!



## THANKS, BETTER



Thanks, *Better* magazine for naming us "Best Builder: Suburbs" for 2021.

Every year, *Better* asks their readers to vote for their favorites—from restaurants, hotels and theaters to architects, builders and designers.

This year, you came out in droves to show your support, casting a whopping 120,000 votes. We thank you for your votes and your support.

## A PICTURE-PERFECT DREAM RANCH

With their four kids grown and married, the timing was right when this couple was approached by someone who wanted to buy their home. Realizing they no longer needed the Gold Key-winning, 11,000-square-foot architectural masterpiece they'd built with Orren Pickell years before, they took the offer and started thinking about where to live next.

They pinpointed a conservation area nearby that offered beautiful views and open space. "We'd been talking with Orren, but we were heading out of town. So Orren and one of the sales team members each drove around the lots and selected their favorites," they recalled. Upon returning home, they were able to choose a lot quickly and move forward.



**Above:** Separated from guest and living areas, the master suite features a spa-like bath with generous marble finishes, a light-filled shower and a freestanding slipper tub.

**Above Right:** A custom glass-walled wine room is a visual showstopper as well as an easy way to choose a bottle from the collection.



### BUILDING WITH ORREN PICKELL A SECOND TIME

"Building our first house with the Orren Pickell group was such a pleasurable experience, it made us very comfortable about doing it again," they explained. "For the first house, we gave the architects a wish list and they came back with concepts. This time, though, we had our idea of a floor plan drawn out—a ranch house that would continue to work for us as we got older. The Pickell team took our idea and made it even better. They probably retained about 90% of what we showed them, but that last 10% made a big difference."

The finished home is an urban farmhouse design—comfortably contemporary inside and out, with an open plan, high ceilings and generous windows that bring light and views into every room, including the garage and closets. "We do a lot of entertaining with small groups, so we wanted an enormous island where at least six people could gather. We have large groups for the holidays, though, and the open design means that people can be in several rooms and still feel like a part of things."

### INDIVIDUALITY MAKES THE HOUSE A HOME

The Pickell team worked with the couple on special touches, such as a home theater with a 190" screen that feels more like a rec room—people can sit anywhere and interact but when a game comes on, it feels like you're at the stadium.

The layout, with a spectacular master suite at one end of the home and guest areas at the other, gives everyone privacy when family and friends come to visit. A covered porch with screens that can be lowered electronically makes the family feel more connected to their breathtaking landscape. Even the laundry room, with ample hanging space, makes doing the laundry more pleasant.

The couple worked with [Marsha Jones Interior Design](#) to help bring their vision for the interiors to life, extending a unified color palette and style from room to room while giving each space its own personality. And, because the home is in a conservation area, they worked with Dave Bier at Futurity to create a lush landscape exclusively with native plants. "We're absolutely thrilled with the whole picture, inside and out."

## STILL A DREAM 18 MONTHS LATER

“Nobody on the project was bashful. Marsha got it, and we worked with a lot of individuals at Orren Pickell. We were all able to say what we were thinking, and everyone took pride in making our house come to be.”

The couple notes that many of their friends remark about the stress of building a custom home or mention that they might do certain things differently in hindsight. “Not us. We had a great time,” they offered. “It can be overwhelming—you have to pick everything but the nuts and bolts. But we never once wished we had done something different. We feel very fortunate.”



**Top Left:** Intimate spaces make the open, flowing plan feel cozy.

**Top Right:** The dining room shines with a more formal interpretation of the overall style.

**Middle Left:** The home theater features a bar, plus a microwave for popping popcorn.

**Middle Right:** Black millwork boldly extends the gray color palette to the home office.

**Bottom:** An “enormous island” was at the top of the wish list for this couple who loves casual entertaining.



## INSIDE A CONTEMPORARY FARMHOUSE: MODERN AMENITIES AND FAMILY-FOCUSED COMFORT

A teardown on a small corner lot has given way to a stunning contemporary farmhouse on Chicago's North Shore—ideal for a family of four with great style and small children.

Inspired by the family's simple aesthetic and desire to spend time together, the home features clean lines and open spaces that center on a dramatic floating staircase. The U-shaped first floor flows through family spaces, including a generous kitchen, family room and a sunroom with glass walls on three sides. Family bedrooms are all upstairs, so the young children are close to their parents.



To make the most of a compact property, a deep basement runs beneath the house, patio and garage, adding three living areas, a kitchenette and two bedrooms to the floorplan. In addition, a home theater gives the family a place to hang out on Saturday nights.

The traditional look conceals the advanced technology behind the walls, including a Kohler DTV+ control system that lets the family control the bath, shower and steam shower through Alexa. Smart controls power window blinds and appliances. In addition, everything from outlet placement and charging stations to ethernet ports reflects the way the family lives and works.

The kitchen came together around a custom fabricated, L-shaped island with a built-in banquette that the owners had seen in the Pickell showroom. The perfect spot for doing homework while meals are prepared and for sharing leisurely family dinners, the gray wood island is a rustic contrast to the surrounding white painted cabinetry, which conceals appliance fronts, specialty storage and extensive storage space. On the floor, broad hardwood planks

chosen for their color and character add natural texture.

The home's white siding, a combination of lap and board-and-batten, is accented by touches of gray and black. A white and gray palette, accented by matte black hardware, continues inside—unifying shared family areas throughout the home. Each individual space, however, incorporates unique tile shapes and textures, lighting and other fixtures so each room can stand on its own. In fact, more than 20 tile profiles were selected to complete five bathrooms, two kitchens, a mudroom and more. A few spaces diverge slightly from the aesthetic—the basement kitchenette cabinets feature a bold, blue finish and nickel hardware. The children picked their own wall colors. And even in the heart of Chicago's winter, a forest mural in the playroom brings the sunshine and green indoors.



**Above:** A two-story floating staircase suits the home's open, airy design.

**Below:** A bespoke banquette brings the family together for meals, homework and games.

**Bottom Left:** Each bath features unique tile and fixtures to vary the white and gray theme.

**Bottom Right:** Additional below-grade living areas and bedrooms maximize the compact footprint.





## Downsizing into a Perfectly Personal Lincoln Park Loft

As a real estate agent, Helen had a good idea what she wanted in a city condo. She no longer needed 5,600 square feet, but she wanted to stay in the neighborhood she loved. Having built and remodeled in the past, she wasn't afraid of the process, but was beginning to wonder if what she wanted actually existed when a sunny loft came on her radar.

"It was ugly," recalls Helen. "The building had been a microscope factory. It was converted in 2001, but it was all really basic. It was exciting to me, though—the space was amazing, it had twelve-foot-high ceilings and big windows that brought in a lot of light."

Helen had worked with the Orren Pickell Building Group more than ten years ago on a lakefront home in New Buffalo, so she knew she could count on the Pickell team to renovate the space. In addition, she brought in a designer to help her go more modern than she had in the past.

While there were no walls being moved, the loft had to be completely gutted and reimagined, starting with a claustrophobic kitchen that divided the open living area with cabinets suspended

over an island. Helen knew she wanted a bright, airy kitchen with great flow for family gatherings and cocktail parties. That meant moving the entire kitchen to one wall—a significant design challenge. "Putting some of the appliances in an oversized island and adding really tall cabinets made it work, and I have all the pantry and storage space I need," explains Helen. "Even the designer said it turned out better than she expected."

The expansive new island is a showstopper, capped by a mammoth slab of stone that required a crane to bring it in through the window. The street was shut down and six workers carried the stone across an adjacent rooftop into the loft. Its highly visible position at the center of the open living space made the effort worthwhile.

A palette of grays and whites, interpreted in wallcoverings, textiles and lighting, unifies the space and allows Helen's bold art to pop throughout the home.

"I feel lucky," comments Helen. "I made this place for myself, and I really enjoyed the process."



**Top:** Varying textures add chic sophistication while letting the owner's art take center stage.

**Above:** It's hard to believe this was once a claustrophobic, closed-off kitchen.



## WILMETTE FAMILY'S PERFECT CUSTOM HOME MAKES IT EASY TO STAY IN.

After years spent obtaining the perfect Wilmette property, this family wasn't willing to trust their design and build to just anyone. "This being our third custom home project, we were very selective," recalls the homeowner. "In the past, we have worked with architects and builders large and small. We've found that Pickell offers an incredible design group along with a building group that can actually carry out the vision and make necessary adjustments on the fly."

What's more, with teens all attending high school virtually, the decision to include ensuite bathrooms for each bedroom has worked out well. Each is able to study and complete homework in their own environment without distraction and they don't need to leave their own spaces until they're ready for a break, something to eat or time with family.

**Top Left:** Enjoying lake breezes on the front porch has become a family favorite.

**Top Center:** Intended as a three-season room, the fireplace makes this fresh space popular year-round.

**Top Right:** A basement space with a variety of seating is a welcome place for teens to hang out.

**Above:** Envisioned as an "everyday oasis" the home is designed for comfort.

### MUCH-APPRECIATED INDIVIDUAL SPACES AND AMENITIES.

The family began planning their dream home well before the pandemic, but many of their decisions paid off when it became time to quarantine.

For example, the design included an attic office space for occasional days working from home. Throughout 2020, that office was called into heavy service. "The space is quiet, has great views of the lake and park, and has an ensuite bathroom so I don't have to leave the floor during the workday," notes the homeowner. "It's actually better than being in my downtown Chicago office, and the lack of commute allows for much more productivity."

A freestanding art studio provides a separate she space away from the main house to focus on and explore creativity as an artist, as well as provide space for never-ending school projects and letting guests tap into their creative sides.

### THOUGHTFUL ADDITIONS ENHANCE FAMILY WELLNESS.

"The Pickell team helped us achieve our dream of having an everyday oasis—a place we don't have to vacation from," adds the homeowner. "During this extended time at home, life hasn't changed much for us. We don't really miss traveling, because the home makes so much of our surroundings."

The front porch is an ideal place to enjoy breezes off the lake. The three-season room—perhaps the most used room in the house year round—features a cozy fireplace. The backyard spa has proven tremendously popular. And the well planned and designed kitchen has made cooking and eating a pleasure while everyone has been eating all meals at home.

Plus, with high-school athletes in the home, the inability to train and practice has been a challenge. The custom gym in the basement has allowed the whole family to work out and the teens to stay in great shape for varsity sports.



“No matter what season or time of day, we have spaces inside and outside to enjoy,” notes the homeowner. But there’s one thing the family didn’t need to do. “You hear about everyone cleaning out garages and closets during quarantine, but Pickell’s closet and garage designs have kept us organized years after moving in.”

**BUILDING ON THE RELATIONSHIP.**

“We truly are thankful for choosing Orren Pickell Building Group to help us build our dream home on our dream site, and this quarantine has made us realize just how thankful we are for the partnership,” comments the homeowner.

“Building a custom home can be stressful at times, and this talented team is there when you need them. The design-build process has been honed over many years and many projects, and we were pleased that we can follow through the various stages right on our own client website. But the greatest asset of a company is its people, and that’s where they really shine, with a team that’s experienced, talented and easy to work with.”



**Middle Left:** White-painted cabinetry and farmhouse sinks live comfortably alongside the modern appliances and features.

**Middle Right:** The dining room fully embraces the warmth and elegance of traditional design.

**Bottom:** The traditional look goes all-white in the luxe master bath.



## ON THE BOARDS AND/OR UNDER CONSTRUCTION



**UNDER CONSTRUCTION IN NAPERVILLE:** 7,000+ sf (10,600 w/basement) contemporary on 2.3 acres with a pond. The first floor features a two-story interior rain curtain water feature that empties into a koi pond, extensive multi-level patio with pool and three pergolas, a gourmet contemporary kitchen with double island, and one of two primary suites. The second level has the second primary suite and three additional bedrooms with ensuite baths. The lower level walk-out basement has a living room, kitchenette, theater space, bar, game area, golf simulator and koi pond.



**ON THE BOARDS IN NEW BUFFALO:** After building their first home in Hinsdale in 2013, now we're building their lake home. The design features first- and second-floor primary bedrooms, a large front porch, a second-story porch and a swimming pool.



**ON THE BOARDS IN WILMETTE:** A major remodel of this 7,000 sf Craftsman home into a Nantucket style home. We're also remodeling the kitchen and primary bath.

## IN THE NEWS



**NAMED ONE OF THE "BEST CUSTOM HOME BUILDERS & DESIGN/BUILD FIRMS IN CHICAGO" BY CHICAGO ARCHITECTS**

The editorial staff said, "Whether it's expanding or renovating an existing home or starting from scratch, these design firms are offering first-rate services from the design phase through the finished product." We're honored to be included in such an esteemed list.

### BEST OF HOUZZ 2021

We are honored to have received both the "Best of Houzz Design" and "Best of Houzz Service" awards again in 2021. Our photos have been saved over 100,000 times on the platform.



### SPACES MAGAZINE

Design journalist Tate Gunnerson recently featured a 5,000 sf, Nantucket-style Orren Pickell client home in a [detailed feature](#).



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## JOIN US IN LIBERTYVILLE ON OCTOBER 14 FOR "50 SHADES OF GREEN"



Michelle Rohrer Lauer of Michelle's Interiors

Join us at Independence Grove for an evening of inspiration and lively conversation about sensible, eco-friendly design choices you can make for your home. We're co-hosting this event with Michelle's Interiors and Schmechtig Landscapes. Visit [michellesinteriors.com/fifty-shades-of-green](https://michellesinteriors.com/fifty-shades-of-green) to register.

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