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# Home *Guide*

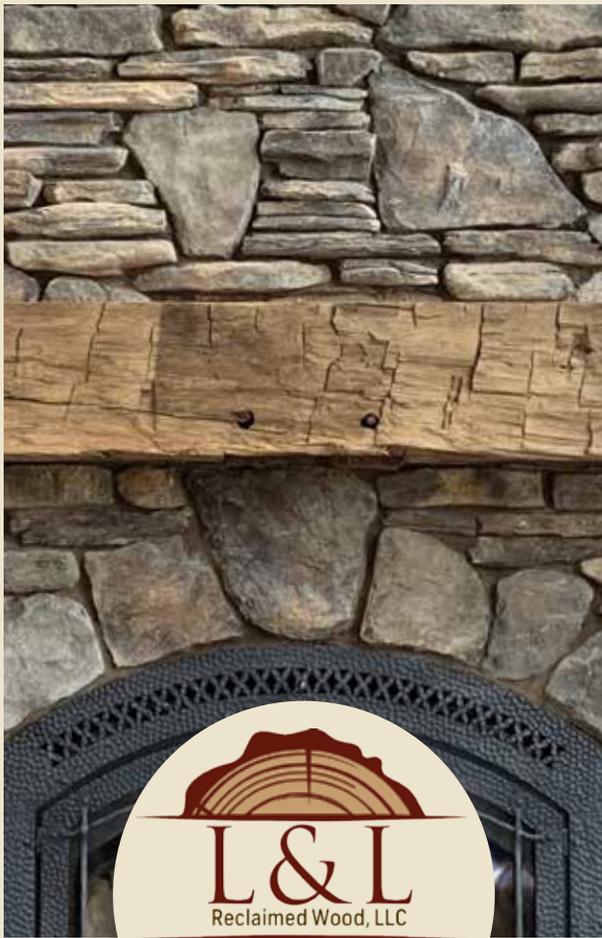


## Home for the holidays

WRITTEN BY HEIDI BETHEL

**O**n top of sheltering in place brought on by COVID-19, the holidays and Reno-Tahoe's nippy weather will have us looking for ways to add a little warmth and holiday cheer inside. We turned to local home experts for tips to make your home merry and bright and your home-buying efforts painless this winter.





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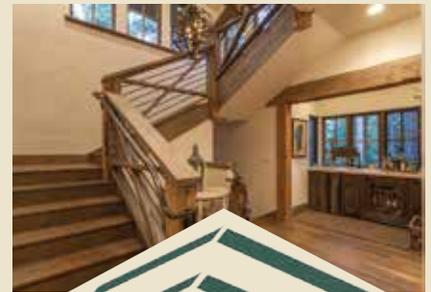
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living there. The difference is extremely noticeable.”

Chad Shearer, owner of Fix-it Chad, servicing Reno, Sparks, and Incline Village, urges residents to change out air filters.

“With the heavy smoke we had here, it’s really important to replace them frequently,” Shearer says. “If not, it hurts the air quality and can damage your furnace and AC unit.”

Shearer also says it’s important to take a look around the outside of the house and fix any small issues that could get worse with inclement weather.

“Winds can be so strong here. Make sure your fences are stabilized and any sealing or caulking is done to keep the cold and critters away,” he adds.

Homeowners should also take time to winterize outdoor kitchens and barbecues. Steve Gunderson, kitchen designer for Cxyz’s Appliances in Reno, explains the process is similar to draining a travel trailer and prepping it for winter.

“Make sure you disconnect any plumbing and bring the faucets indoors,” he explains. “Just like with a motorhome, [parts] with water can freeze and crack. You’ll end up putting in new faucets and fixing other damage. Same goes with any outdoor refrigerator or icemaker.”



### Getting Winter Ready

During the wintry months, when the air is dry, the snow piles up, and the chilly weather keeps families indoors, it’s important to make a few adjustments to the house and yard. First, prioritize your home’s air quality and comfort. Rather than refilling small humidifiers and plugging in compact air purifiers in every room, Rickey Hayes, marketing manager at Sierra Air Inc. in Reno, suggests installing a master humidifying system.

“We offer options that keep humidity levels around 35 percent in the whole house,” he explains. “These safer levels of humidity are good for [those]



Barbecues should be cleaned with a degreaser and gas lines unplugged, Gunderson notes.

“Grease and [gunk] build up over time and mess with the performance of your barbecue,” he adds. “Now’s a good time to clean it up and get it ready to either keep using it or storing it for winter.”



Patent Pending

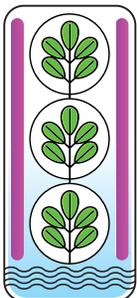
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In anticipation of the holidays and with company on the way, Don Hanley, co-owner of Just in Time Cleaning in Reno, recommends keeping up on the picking up.

"Grab the little [items] when you're done with [them] and put [them] away," Hanley says. "Otherwise, during the holiday season, you end up with a mountain of tasks that will overwhelm you. Doing a little bit every day will make a very big difference."

### Merry Mantel

Speaking of holidays, there's nothing quite as festive as a beautifully decorated fireplace mantel. Jay Lebel, co-owner of J&S Custom Homes Inc., and L & L Reclaimed Wood LLC, of Sparks, makes many different styles of mantels, all of which bring warmth to a home.



A mantel made from reclaimed wood adds warmth and personality to a home.  
Photo courtesy of L & L Reclaimed Wood LLC

"There's something special about a mantel, especially if you get to make it your own using authentic reclaimed wood," he explains.

Lebel has installed everything from a modern milled mantel to a solid hunk of old wood and simple metal pieces with corbel brackets.

### Flex Your Space

In today's world of Zoom meetings, distance learning, and working from home, functional areas that serve multiple purposes have become necessary for most families.



This home offers a small space that easily converts into a nook for working or studying. Photo courtesy of Toll Brothers

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A kitchen remodel is one of the best investments you can make in terms of adding resale value.

Caryn Pollock, marketing manager of the Reno division of Toll Brothers builders, suggests ingenuity when considering flexible places in the home.

"In my house, we have a laundry room that's pretty large," she notes. "If I pulled out the laundry sink that I never use, it could be a great drop zone for a small laptop desk and little stool, making a private, quiet space for a Zoom meeting with a door that can shut. Convert space for functionality. Be creative with the space you've got."

### **Expertly Designed Interiors Sell**

When considering redecorating or a renovation, consult the experts first. An interior designer's abilities are developed over years of experience and, in most cases, built on natural talent.

As Charlotte Michaels, founder and manager of Transcend Interiors in Reno, explains, "Designers know which rug will look best. They can look at a 7-inch-by-7-inch swatch of fabric and tell if it will work well covering a sofa. And, most importantly, they know if the scale is right."

Michaels notes that exciting interiors incorporate new and daring ideas, but skill and practice are needed to bring [elements] together seamlessly.



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As Sam Olson, team lead/owner of The Olson Group of RE/MAX Realty Affiliates in Reno, explains, now is the time to be thinking about renovations and how they might affect the resale value of a home.

“It’s a nice time to reevaluate the inside of the home. Is your kitchen dated? You can do a really nice rehab for \$10,000 or less. Kitchens and bathrooms are the best investment you can make on the house and can be an even trade because these are the rooms that sell houses,” Olson says. “It is certainly worth reaching out to local craftsmen and decorators to see what your options are.”

Residential specialist Karen Walker Hill, who works for Ferrari-Lund Real Estate in Reno, echoes this sentiment.

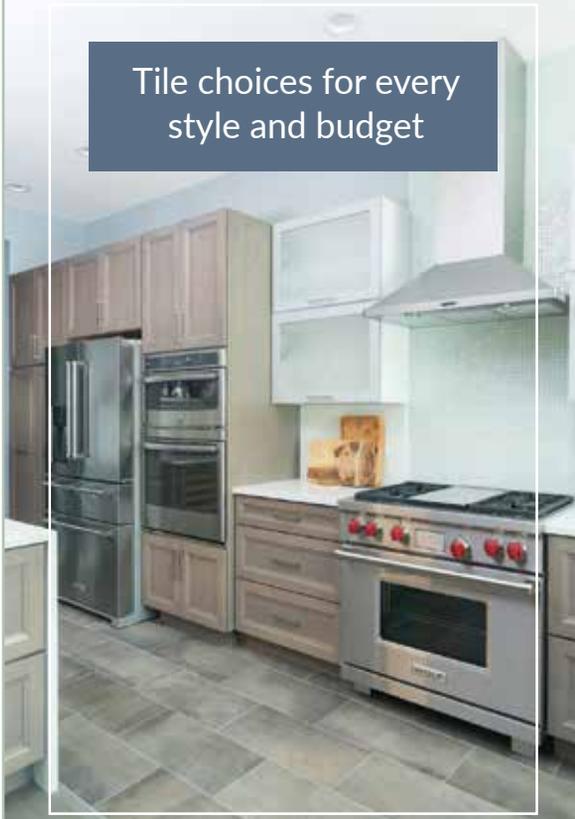
“When trying to sell your home, you want to be prepared so it has the best chance of being sold at top value,” she says. “It needs to show well, be clean, and have any honey-do repairs finished. Paint the trim, fix the broken window, clean the gutters. Wash, wash, wash.”

**Keep On Growing**

Even though winter is upon us, you can still have homegrown produce and flowers with help from Tahoe Gardens’ Column Farm. Co-founders Ron Kmetovicz and Dave Duffié are on a mission with their vertical gardening system, which houses everything needed to cultivate fresh, organic plants.

“This garden requires a 30-inch-by-30-inch space and a power source,” Duffié explains. “I had mine in my pantry and moved it to the corner of my living room. I have food

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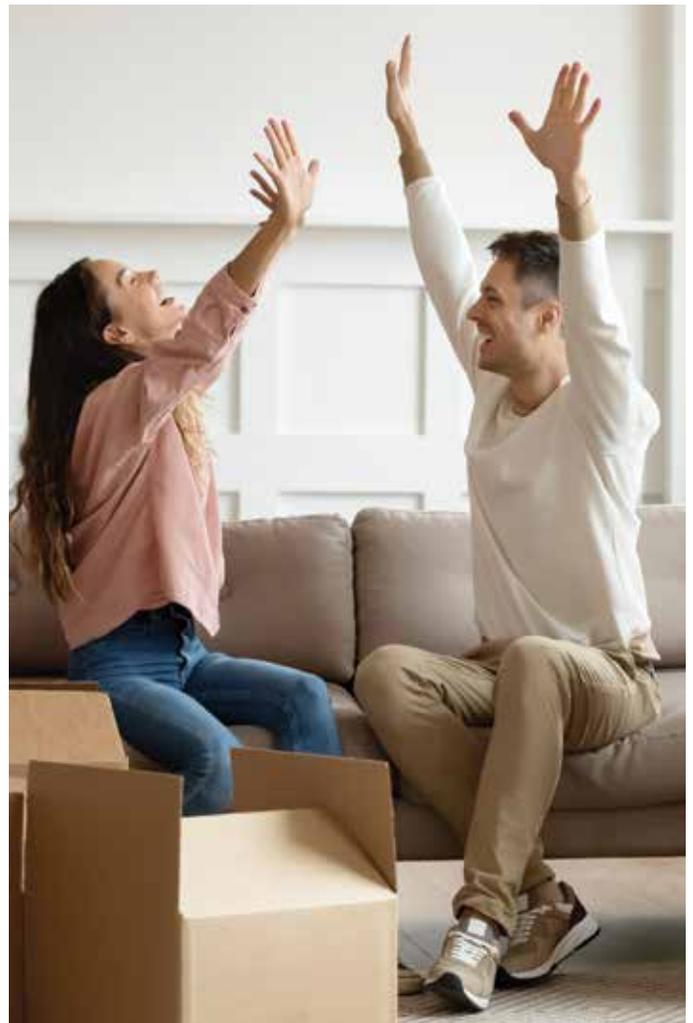


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security year-round and know exactly where my produce comes from.”

“There’s no seasonality to it,” Kmetovicz adds. “Anything you could grow in June or July, you can grow in January. We are seed to harvest. After planting, within six weeks, you end up with something on your table that you can eat.”

#### **Credit Check**

Along with the health of your home, work on your financial health this winter, especially as the housing market keeps heating up. Shane Braninburg, mortgage consultant with Big Valley Mortgage in Reno, emphasizes the importance of knowing where your credit stands.



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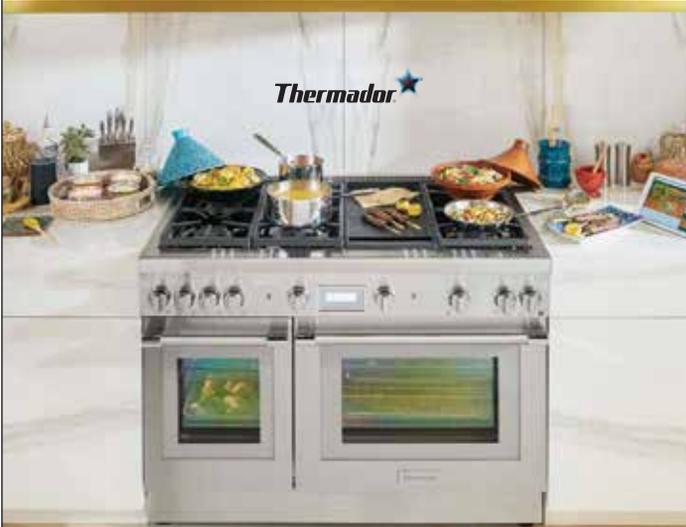
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"Good credit is going to help in life no matter what," he says.

He says it's best to contact a local lender, someone who can hop on a phone call or meet in person or via video chat to discuss your current credit standing.

"We do a soft pull so it doesn't impact credit but gives us a glance at where you stand," Braninburg says.

Right now, a minimum credit score of 580 is needed for specialized home loans such as Federal Housing Administration and Veterans Affairs loans. For conventional loans, a credit score must be 620 or higher.

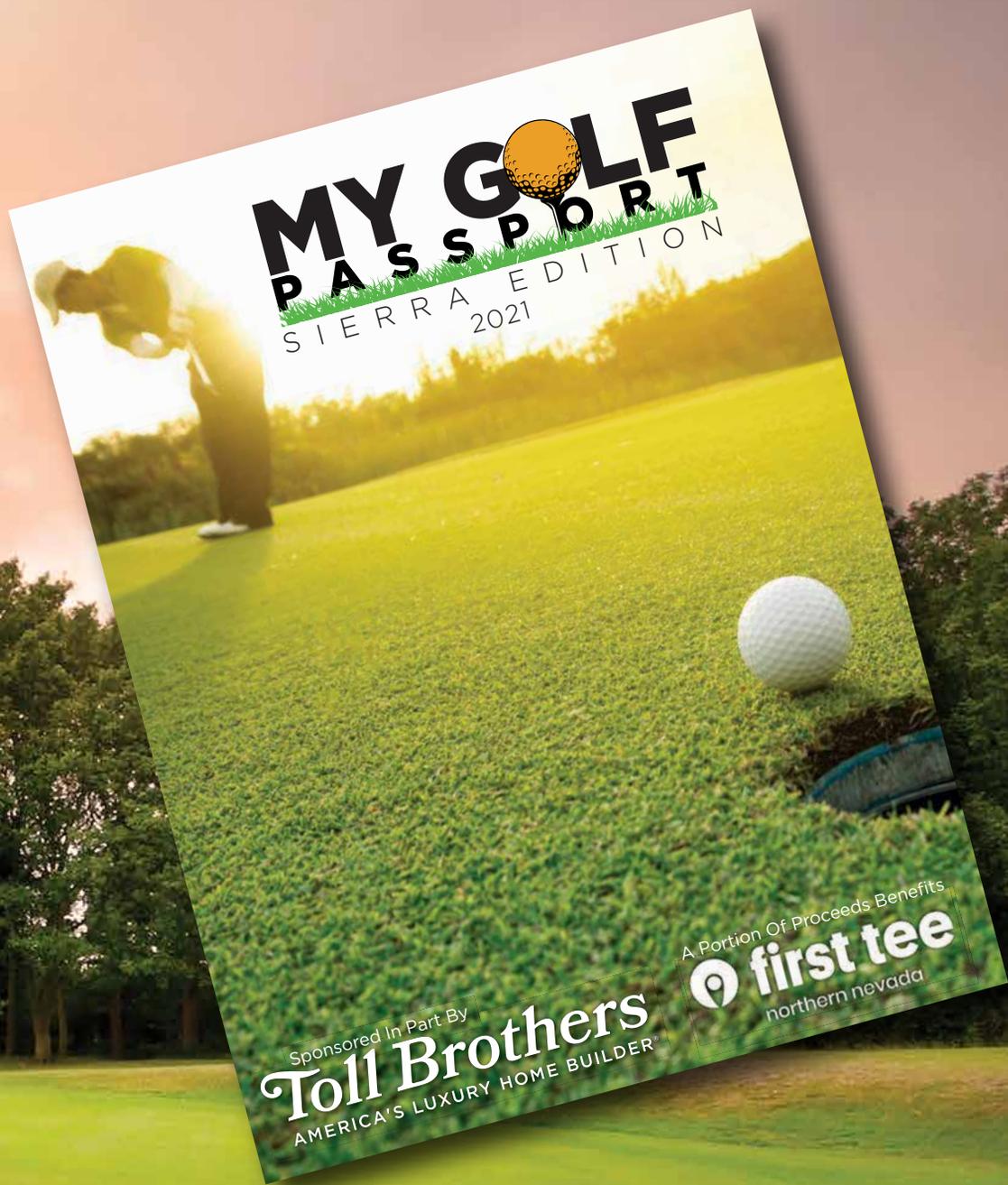
### Buying a Home in 2021

For those looking to purchase their first home, Betsy Caron, Realtor with Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Drysdale Properties in Sparks, recommends preparing for about a six-month process. To start, she suggests folks speak with a lender and Realtor in tandem to determine the budget and general preferences.

"Patience is key," Caron explains. "A lot of people are out there looking right now. If you want to buy because your lease is coming up, it's good if you start looking six months beforehand. [The process] can go quicker, but it's good to give yourself that leeway to realize where you are financially and where you want to be."



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