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HOMES & LIVING

FALL 2021

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Giving the
Heart
 of the
HOMIE
 a facelift

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The KITCHEN

is where
memories
 are made

By JENNIFER AMATO
 Managing Editor

Confused by a mix of summer weather, pandemic guidelines, the need to be safe yet the need to be social, people are choosing to be out-and-about, enjoy staycations and/or develop more functional home spaces.

A key component of living has become the kitchen area, which is generally a focal point for most family gatherings.

“We still see a lot of open design kitchens, with the family room and dining room sharing space with the kitchen,” said Kim Evans,

general manager of Cranbury Design Center in Hightstown. “Large islands, two-toned kitchens utilizing blue and gray as contrasting colors are popular. Large windows that let natural light in are also big right now. Stainless appliances, beverage centers and pantry storage areas are in lots of the kitchens we are designing now.”

According to Elizabeth O’Leary, one of the lead designers at Cranbury Design Center, there certainly have been some design changes in kitchens due to the pandemic, Evans said.

“With families sheltered in their home spaces, we’ve seen kitchens become more multi-functional. Kitchen islands have become larger as some clients are using them as work-at-home spaces and for children’s school-work. The pandemic has led towards more home cooking and experimenting with different recipes (bread baking, garden-to-table meals and gourmet cooking) and our clients’ kitchen design and appliance choices reflect this. We’ve designed beverage centers in some kitchens for coffee stations and cold beverage storage out of the footprint of the main kitchen area,” Evans said.

If a homeowner is unable to redo their entire kitchen, there



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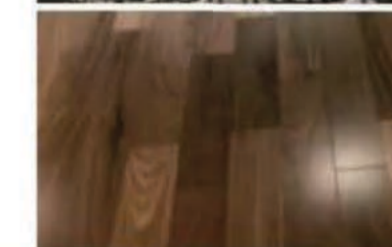


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RENOVATION

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are certain aspects that are more viable or popular, or even less expensive than others.

“Hardware changeouts, adding or redoing the kitchen backsplash, a new coat of paint and possibly upgrading the appliances are popular changes people can make to breathe new life into their kitchens,” Evans said.

However, construction has also been impacted by the lockdown and shortage of materials and employees.

“With the supply chain challenges, a lot of kitchen design professionals are hav-

ing right now extended delivery times for appliances, cabinets, some plumbing, tile and lighting fixtures; kitchen renovation times have stretched beyond the usual 10-12 weeks we usually see. We work with clients to set a project timeline once we have confirmed delivery dates for appliances and cabinetry – these have the longest lead times in most kitchen projects right now,” Evans said.

Aside from making the kitchen more manageable and functional, renovations can also impact a home’s resale value.

“A newly renovated kitchen can be what separates your home’s value and sales price versus an outdated kitchen,” Evans said. “But kitchens are highly personal, so we advise our clients to make selections based on their personal style and to enjoy their kitchen space. If a client is

looking to update to sell, we try to help them keep the remodel simple.”

Kitchens are a main component of a home because families tend to create and enjoy memories centered around food, Evans said.

“The kitchen has long been the gathering space of families to create these memories. No matter how big or small, the kitchen is where we all tend to gather,” Evans said.

Cranbury Design Center is located at 145 W. Ward St., Hightstown, owned by Frank O’Leary and Charlie Rini. For more information, visit www.cranburydesigncenter.com ■

PHOTO COURTESY OF
CRANBURY DESIGN CENTER



Enjoy, Explore METUCHEN

'Explore, Experience, Enjoy' a Revitalized Downtown Metuchen

By JENNIFER AMATO
Managing Editor

The vision for Metuchen is to encourage a welcoming, walkable and inclusive downtown.

Amongst 3.14 miles of about 80 acres, there are three sections from Main Street from the train station to Borough Hall, including New Street; the area around

Whole Foods and along Middlesex Avenue; and south main from the station to the Greenway, including the Forum Theater.

The borough flourishes with recreation, public art, entertainment and history.

"Downtown is a crossroads where people from our town and throughout our region can gather. Young people gain independence going downtown, and older adults benefit from being

surrounded by people of all ages. Our greatest appeal in Metuchen is we are walkable with a unique selection of restaurants and businesses from established favorites to the 26 that have opened since 2020," said Isaac Kremer, executive director of the Metuchen Downtown Alliance (MDA).

The MDA was formed in 2017 to foster

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the growth and abundance of the area in a widespread effort to revitalize the borough.

Metuchen follows the Main Street America approach, which is centered around transformation strategies, which articulate a focused, deliberate path to revitalizing or strengthening a down-

town or commercial district's economy, according to its website. Work is usually centered on economic vitality, design, promotion and organization.

The MDA has been recognized as a 2021 Accredited Program, a top-tier rating by the Main Street New Jersey and Main Street America programs for "demonstrating a commitment to comprehensive community revitalization."

"We're really pleased and honored to be recognized by the Main Street New Jersey program and Main Street

America," Kremer said. "It's just a sign that as an organization we've made many good choices and we're on the right path to achieving our goal of revitalizing the downtown."

Since its founding in 2016, more than 126 business have been established in the district and more than \$150 million has been invested, according to the MDA. After subtracting businesses that closed, this has resulted in 44 net new businesses in downtown Metuchen. Two businesses moved in 2020 from one location to another within the district. Of businesses that opened in the district since the MDA started, 24 of these subsequently closed.

"Well, fast-forward five years later, with 126 business starts and over \$150 million invested, I'm pretty sure that we've

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PHOTO COURTESY OF ISAAC KREMER/
METUCHEN DOWNTOWN ASSOCIATION

Left: A view of Downtown Metuchen after a major revitalization effort. Right: A view of Downtown Metuchen before a major revitalization effort.



Are you ready to start your kitchen or bath project?

Cranbury Design Center listens to your ideas and then uses color drawings of your space to help make your vision a reality. We assist with design decisions, cabinet, countertop and hardware selections, and finishing touches like backsplash tile and paint colors. Call us or visit us online to get started on your remodel. We look forward to meeting you!



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