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Designing a Kitchen or Bath with *Lezzer Lumber*



Margie Poteau & Jason McLean

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By Kathy Hunt

Spend a quiet weekend at home and, by Monday morning, you probably have found at least one thing that could be replaced or improved in your house. According to the Joint Center for Housing Centers of Harvard University, Americans are projected to spend \$485 billion on home remodeling projects in 2024; this is an increase from the \$472 billion spent in 2022. Often, homeowners focus on kitchens or bathrooms, citing the desire for a change or the need to swap out old or broken appliances, add features, and make a space more livable as the reason for renovating.

Whether you want to freshen up or completely transform a room, Lezzer Lumber has the designers, supplies, and expertise to get the job done. Family-owned for three generations, Lezzer Lumber opened its first location in Curwensville, Pennsylvania, in 1927. At that time, it was known as Sandri-Lezzer Lumber and Farm Equipment in honor of its founders Michael Lezzer and his cousins Louie and Charlie Sandri.

Almost a century later, Lezzer Lumber is one of the 50 largest building-supply materials distributors in the United States, and it remains family-owned. It has 12 retail locations in Pennsylvania, including in Berks, Chester, Lancaster, and Northampton counties, operates commercial door facilities in Lancaster, State College, and Williamsport, and has a truss manufacturing plant in Curwensville. It ships anywhere in Pennsylvania, Delaware, and New Jersey and to parts of New York, Maryland, and Ohio, and has dedicated shippers and drivers who understand how to safely pack and transport materials and furniture such as cabinets and vanities.

In 2022, Lezzer Lumber acquired Green Hills Lumber at 3171 Morgantown Road in Mohnton, on the outskirts of Reading. This became Lezzer Lumber's 12th retail location. Green Hills Lumber's professional designer Scott Dietrich remained in his position at the store, where he was joined by longtime designers Jason McLean and Margie Poteau who started at Lezzer Lumber's Lancaster store in 2011. McLean and Poteau have been a professional design team for 26 years.

Asked what distinguishes Lezzer Lumber — and its kitchen and bath designers in particular — from the competition, Poteau said, "Experience. We know how to navigate through a lot of different and difficult situations," adding, "Just when you think you've seen everything, you haven't."



Considerations for renovations big and small

Once you have decided that your kitchen cabinets, bathroom shower, or whole room should be updated, you face a range of things to consider. The key concern with any home improvement project, though, is cost. How much do you have to spend? Do you work from scratch and replace everything, or can you get away with a less costly endeavor by getting new fixtures, flooring, or paint? Maybe you want to add more space to your kitchen or bath, too? How much will it cost to do whatever type of home improvement you choose?

"People see a lot of things online," McLean said. "They go onto Pinterest, Houzz and other places to get ideas. They come in and say, 'I really want this,' but then we tell them it'll be \$10,000, which is more than they want to spend . . . It's the

expectations of what things cost over what things actually cost," he said.

Beyond cost, Poteau said another thing to think about is the color scheme. Countless articles have been written about how color can impact people's impressions of a space, mood, and even productivity. All stress how important it is to select the right color for a room. Light colors can make a small room appear bigger while dark colors can turn large rooms into intimate spaces. Sometimes, other aspects may play into the success of a specific color. If a room gets little or no natural light, a dark color can make it seem dim and gloomy.

Good designers like McLean and Poteau, a design graduate of Berks Technical Institute, can aid customers in making smart choices about colors, lighting, and other features in a room. However, both pointed out that, when it comes to colors and styles, each customer is different. "People like what they like," said McLean, whom Poteau referred to as "Dr. Kitchen."



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One thing to avoid in the initial planning stage is buying the appliances first. "Designing a room around new appliances is not the easiest way to do it," McLean said. "We can work the kitchen around whatever appliances the customers are using, but it's not the best order."

Collaborating on design ideas

You have come up with a budget and rough idea of how you want to improve a specific room. Now, the real work begins. You will need to figure out what fits where, who carries what you need to buy, and who installs your new cabinetry, sink, floor, and more. At this point, interior designers become an essential part of your remodeling team. No one wants to end up with a new range that rises a half-inch higher than the adjoining countertop or a freestanding vanity that consumes all the space in a bathroom. By establishing space requirements, selecting essential components, and keeping design principles in mind, McLean and Poteau ensure that your room ends up being a safe, functional, and attractive place.

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What's in for Kitchen and Bath Design

During their 26 years as kitchen and bath designers, Jason McLean and Margie Poteau have seen trends come and go. Presently, customers are flocking to the following styles and/or accessories for kitchens and bathrooms:

- White shaker cabinets, base cabinets, and lots of drawers in kitchens.
- Hoods over kitchen ranges and cooktops to help remove odors and smoke created while cooking. Hoods have largely replaced microwaves as the item placed above a range or cooktop, McLean said.
- Wood range hoods have become increasingly popular as people want a nicer looking hood area, Poteau said.
- The return of some stain finishes.
- Stained islands with different colored perimeters.
- Taller refrigerators and larger, 36-inch ranges.
- Floating shelves.
- Free-standing, "furniture-style" bathroom vanities.



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Because customer service is a high priority, it is advisable for customers to set up an appointment to discuss design ideas. They can schedule a design meeting by calling the Reading location at 610.856.1600, stopping by the store, or filling out the “request a quote” form online at www.lezzerlumber.com/contact.

At personalized, in-store appointments, customers share what they like and don't like about their kitchen or bath, what their intended project entails, and whether they'll work with a builder or carry out the renovations themselves. McLean noted that customers are encouraged to send measurements or drawings in advance of meeting with the designer, but this is not a requirement.

“People will come in with ideas about what they want to change in their kitchens,” McLean said. “We listen, see what their needs are, and what kinds of things they want to fit into their kitchens, whether that be an extra refrigerator, silverware trays, floating shelves, or a larger range. We give suggestions and advise them on ways to improve their renovation.”

Basic information in hand, McLean carries out a free, in-home measurement of the customer's kitchen or bath. Using the leading design software, *2020 Design Live*, either he or Poteau creates a three-dimensional, color rendering of the remodeled space so that the customer can visualize the proposed changes. After the customer approves the final design, Poteau or McLean assist in the selection of complementary cabinets, flooring, tile, sinks, faucets, tubs, and hardware.



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“It's exciting when you figure out a design for an existing space,” Poteau said.

McLean added that 40 percent of their designs are for existing spaces while 60 percent are for new construction.

If a customer needs a general contractor to oversee and carry out the project, McLean and Poteau can provide a list of preferred contractors. As for who to choose for plumbing and other specialty work, general contractors often have their

own lists of recommended plumbers, electricians, and tile installers.

“Jason and Margie have years of experience, and they work the whole way through the process with the customer, from the design through the installation,” said Kaethe Huber, manager of the Reading store and a Lezzer Lumber employee since 2007. “Their combined knowledge, experiences, and focus on customer service make remodeling easier.”



From design to installation, supporting all budgets and needs

To meet customers' varying budgets, design ideas, and living needs, Lezzer Lumber carries a range of products and brands. This includes cabinetry consisting of melamine, laminate, MDF, or wood from such companies as Wellborn and Fabuwood, and countertops made from laminate, solid surface, quartz, and granite.

“We have a complete showroom featuring three different cabinet lines, bath hardware, and a countertop selection center, and offer everything from conventional, or cookie-cutter, types of setups to custom work,” Huber said, adding, “We're a full-service lumber yard, so anything from the beginning of the project to the end, we can supply.”

McLean noted that every house is different and so is every person. As a result, custom work, or personalization of a room's design, is to be expected.

“Some people want a useable kitchen. They cook all the time and want the kitchen to be functional. Some people rarely use their kitchen and want it for entertaining,” Poteau said. “For people who just want to entertain, we can design a big island with seating so that people can gather there.”

Lezzer Lumber also specializes in custom work for accessible living and, as its website states, “designing new constructions or remodeling existing spaces to create customized solutions that meet your specific needs.” Among its accessible solutions are curb-less, walk-in showers, grab bars, and shower seats.

In addition to working with general consumers, the business can assist contrac-





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Lezzer Lumber

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tors and commercial customers. For contractors, Lezzer Lumber's contractor sales staff can provide material take-offs and estimates, job site visits, and delivery coordination and scheduling. Housing developers, professional builders, and commercial contractors can receive budget planning assistance, project planning coordination, on-site supervision, material take-offs and quotes, and turnkey services from its commercial sales staff.

Helping customers and their communities

Lezzer Lumber staff are trained to put customers first and to ensure that their needs are met in a timely and satisfying manner. Their dedication to customer service and helping others extends beyond their store's walls and into their communities. In Reading, Lezzer Lumber

works closely with the Home Builders Association (HBA) of Berks County, whose mission is to be "a leading advocate for the building industry by promoting trust and value for the community."

Chartered in 1957, the HBA of Berks County's mission is to "inform, educate, take legislative action, provide a forum for business and professional interaction, and assist HBA Members in the operation of their businesses." Among the services provided are printed and online publications covering home maintenance and

renovations and a directory of residential contractors and related construction businesses, all of which belong to the HBA.

"Lezzer leadership wants each location to perform community outreach or service," Huber said. Earlier in the year, our Reading store held a blood drive. Last year, we ran a Thanksgiving food drive for Helping Harvest Fresh Food Bank in Reading, and we'll do it again this year."

Each of Lezzer Lumber's retail locations selects a different community

organization to support and comes up with different ways to give back to their communities. Some even hold fundraisers for scholarships to local trade and technical schools, Huber said.

With its emphasis on customer and community service, wealth of experienced and knowledgeable designers and other employees, and its ability to satisfy all remodeling needs, Lezzer Lumber in Reading is fast becoming the go-to store for kitchen and bath remodeling.

For additional information about Lezzer Lumber, visit the website www.lezzerlumber.com or physical site at 3171 Morgantown Road in Mohnton. You can also follow Lezzer Lumber on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Pinterest, and LinkedIn by clicking on the corresponding social media icons at the bottom of its website's homepage.