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BECKONING BACKYARD

How local design teams transformed this River Hills home

BY RICK ROMANO | PHOTOS BY DOUG EDMUNDS

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A colorfully landscaped fire pit area, crafted by LandWorks Inc. and M Design Build, lends additional warmth to the outdoor-entertaining space.

JIM GLEASON PAINTS A VIVID PICTURE OF what he loves about his newly renovated River Hills home.

“[There was] a doe walking through the backyard with her fawn who was on wobbly legs, very young,” Gleason says. “She slowed down to let the fawn catch up before moving on. It was a moment.”

That moment, amid an array of natural wonders and combined with recreational elements, anchors the inspiration for the home’s exterior makeover. It was provided by Mequon-based M Design Build, which

coordinated a team of subcontractors. The revamp was finished in 2018, not long after an interior transformation was completed.

A single-again retired owner of two medical technology firms, Gleason sought the 5-acre property that reminded him of growing up with six siblings on a large, natural lot in Menomonee Falls. He enlisted professional help to carve out possibilities for relaxation and recreation. The result is an array of new structures, as well as his treasured natural elements.



OUTSIDE IN

A 22-square-foot lanai attached to the back of the home provides a place to lounge al fresco with just the right amount of shelter. The key, according to Gleason and Mike Slawnikowski, M Design Build owner and president, is the electronically-controlled roll-down screens that ensure insect-free comfort.

Architect Meg Baniukiewicz of HB Designs LLC in Whitefish Bay designed the lanai with a single-seam metal roof and columns she conceived to give an added-dimension to the front door. Baniukiewicz also took cues from the home's Cape Cod architecture to build an additional two-story, three-garage structure that provides an additional living room, kitchen and sleeping space.

Interior designer Becky Grinwald of Peabody's Interiors in Milwaukee infused the garage/living space with a masculine vibe via earthy tones such as gray, blue, taupe, cream and charcoal, plus wood and metallic finishes and subtle tribal patterns. *(continued on page 66)*

Above: The thoughtfully designed lanai combines the best of indoor and outdoor living, blending fresh air and lush natural views with quality furnishings that invite guests to settle in and enjoy.

Left: The redesigned garage provides fine accommodations for overnight guests — and also houses Gleason's cars, including his prized 1996 Porsche 911 twin turbo, shown here.



THE GREAT OUTDOORS

Gleason opted for a new swimming pool instead of spending more to repair an existing one and had an outdoor kitchen added to the property. He also has plotted out a space for croquet. Because he enjoys wildlife, landscape accommodation was made for bee keeping, attracting bats, birds and ducks at a shared pond at the far rear of the property.

Landscaping designs complement the indoor-outdoor areas, but do so in a deliberately unfussy manner, says Bob Diel of LandWorks Inc. in Sussex. "This is more of an English cottage garden design and landscape," Diel says, noting the informal style and the emphasis on blossoming perennial flowers and boxwood that deter the deer that populate the area.

Diel also points out the wood-chip path leading to the pond was created from trees removed from the property. *(continued on page 68)*

Above: Gleason's new pool from Great Lakes Pool & Spa features gorgeous tile work and a faux pebbled bottom. A brightly striped umbrella from Laacke & Joys adds pop and protection to poolside dining.

Right: Dappled sunlight and lush recliners from Peabody's Interiors invite post-swim relaxation.





Rounding out the exterior ambience is an audio/visual system that provides smart-phone-controlled satellite radio and includes more than 10 speakers and subwoofers around the pool. A large, flat-screen television serves the lanai. The system was installed by Dave Klebenow, owner of Oak Creek based Precision Audio Video.

PROJECT COORDINATION

Terry Perschbacher, production manager at M Design Build, coordinated the multiple subcontractors to maximum effect. Perschbacher says the exterior project's details required all of the remodeling experience he has accrued since the late 1990s.

"There is a lot of negotiating that goes on in this business," Perschbacher explains. "It's really about building relationships and being in a position to help each other out about what is needed and within realistic deadlines."

Those relationships, he says, helped make this project run smoothly. In late June, he was helping coordinate the finishing touches to the grounds after a cool, wet spring. "This is one of the best projects that I have done," Perschbacher says. "It was just a nice outcome." MKE

The completed design project displays the full impact of talented local teams working together to turn homeowner Jim Gleason's backyard into a welcoming oasis of comfort, fun and relaxation.