

SPECIAL ADVERTISING FEATURE

# Home *Guide*



## Warm Winter Dwellings

**Create holiday memories and welcoming homes with tips from local experts.**

WRITTEN BY HEIDI BETHEL

**A**s cooler weather approaches and snow blankets Reno-Tahoe, folks tend to head indoors. Whether you're preparing a family meal, choosing a new paint color for the walls, or planning to make some upgrades, look no further than these pages for recommendations from area home professionals.





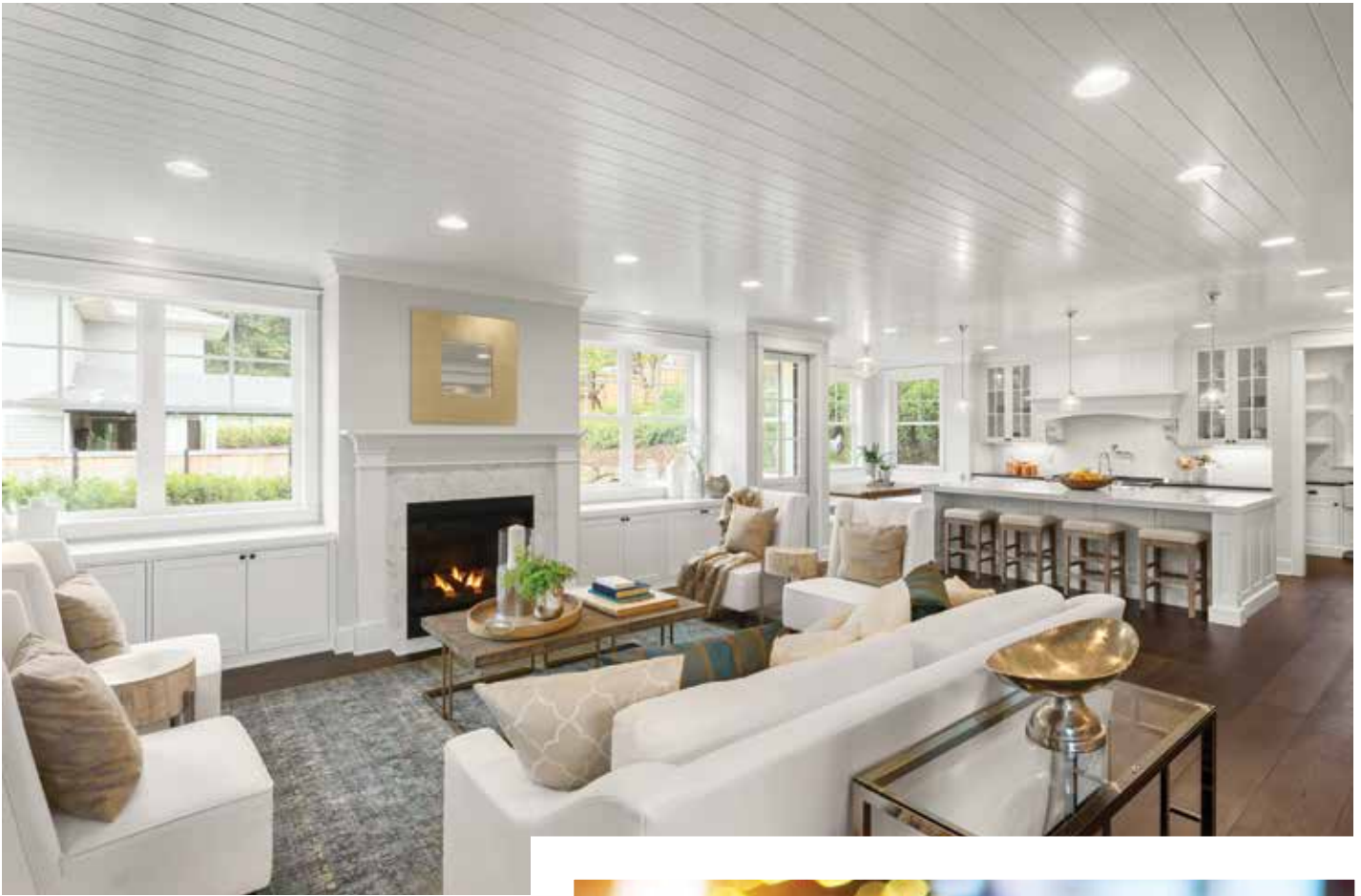
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### Great Gathering Spaces

This time of year, the indoors is where we spend special occasions and entertain guests, who yearn for comfort and great company. Donna O'Connell, Reno division president of Toll Brothers, knows homebuyers appreciate a welcoming space.

"Winter is when we cozy up in front of the fireplace to gather with family and friends, or spend lazy afternoons in the kitchen whipping up our favorite holiday meals," she explains. "During the holiday season, we spend so much time in our kitchens. With an open-concept design, for which Toll Brothers is known, you remain part of the party, and the kitchen often becomes a key space where folks congregate."

Sam Olson, team lead/owner of The Olson Group of RE/MAX Gold in Reno, agrees and emphasizes making the most out of the space you have.



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"When the weather cools and people begin spending more time indoors, this is where they are really using their homes the most," Olson says. "A lot of homes have dated brick fireplaces that can be really heavy, sink the room, and make it feel smaller than it really is."

Olson suggests updating it with a fun new trend, such as white facing or the addition of shiplap to lighten the space.

"Brightening up a gathering space will make it more inviting and justify the value of a fireplace," he says. "Once you're ready, it'll make a home sell faster, too."



### Create a Blank Canvas

When it comes to paint color and décor for a home you're selling, it's important to leave a little room for the imagination.

"Painting the walls a neutral color, but to where you still feel comfortable, offers a blank canvas for when you put your home on the market," explains Betsy Caron, Realtor with Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Drysdale Properties in Sparks. "You want future homeowners to picture their family heirlooms on the walls and make [the home] theirs. When you have big, bright, bold colors, it changes the energy and is less personal. You want prospective buyers to come in and feel as if they can make your home into their home."



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### Helpful Hobby Stations

Looking to stay put in your current home? Perhaps adding some personal touches can add to your enjoyment of living here. Giftwrapping, scrapbooking, sewing, and even building miniature cars all can get a bit more exciting and bring more pleasure when you have a custom hobby station from California Closets in Reno. Dan Du Mond, design manager for California Closets, encourages hobbyists to consider reviving their spaces to make them exactly what they need.

"Our systems are completely custom and built into the space," Du Mond says. "We can build a sitting area, or if the person is tall or prefers to stand, we can use a higher table. Plus, we have more than 20 different finishes to create a unique look. Hobby stations are not so modular anymore."



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### Bright-eyed Buyers

"Between November and December, market activity tends to slow down, but the quality of the buyer goes through the roof," explains Karen Walker Hill, residential specialist for Ferrari-Lund Real Estate in Reno. "People don't go look at houses this time of year unless they really want to buy."

She explains that now is a great time to put a house on the market, and it's less competitive for those looking to buy.

"Even though inventories are low, there's not as much competition with multiple offers because people who have children really try to do it in the summer when it's easier to move. If you're buying in the winter, you do have less competition, so you have a little more time to consider the purchase."

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### Consider a HELOC

Almost two years ago, Lindsey and Michael Gay purchased Lindsey's grandparents' home, the place where her father was raised. The Gays knew they wanted to keep the nostalgia but were not too keen on the outdated layout and style. With the help of a home equity line of credit (also called a HELOC) from Greater Nevada Credit Union, the Gays were able to completely overhaul the house and make it their own.

"We literally took the house down to the studs and put it back together," Lindsey explains. "We have new HVAC, plumbing, electrical ... We added a bed and bath, put in a new laundry, and took the whole main living space from smaller rooms to an open concept with a fully updated kitchen. We vaulted the ceilings and added a skylight to brighten things up. Lastly, we gutted and updated the front yard.

"This is our second HELOC with GNCU. The process was easy, quick, and stress free."

A line of credit that leverages the equity of the home, a HELOC factors the worth of the property minus what is owed. The financing offered only requires repayment based on whether and how much of it is used. This provides funds that can be used for upgrades and renovations at the homeowner's discretion.



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### Fix the Furnace

Lastly, don't forget the climate of your home as winter begins. Rickey Hayes, marketing manager for Sierra Air Inc. in Reno, reminds folks to have their heating checked.

"It's very important to do your furnace maintenance every year," he says. "With the furnace, you're dealing with heat combustion, so there's a gas line and flame. Everything needs to be working correctly and safely."

Hayes also recommends installing a home humidifier, which can bring humidity levels up to the ideal percentage.

"Having the right levels of humidity in your home can help mitigate the spreading of viruses and bacteria in the air," he says. "It's so good for you to be in 30 percent humidity because it opens up your airways and you can breathe easier."

Make it a happy, healthy, beautiful holiday season in your home! Should you need additional information, be sure to contact local experts for their take on the topic. ❖



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Artsourcerenogallery.com

**Betsy Caron, Berkshire Hathaway  
HomeServices Drysdale Properties**  
Bhhsdrysdale.com

**California Closets**  
Californiaclosets.com

**Czyz's Appliance**  
Czyzsbrandsource.com

**Desert Wind Homes**  
Desertwindhomes.com

**Greater Nevada Credit Union**  
Gncu.org

**Karen Walker Hill,  
Ferrari-Lund Real Estate**  
Ferrari-lund.com

**Shane Braninburg,  
Big Valley Mortgage**  
Bigvalleymortgage.com

**Sierra Air Inc.**  
Sierraair.com

**The Olson Group of RE/MAX Gold**  
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