

StarTribune | housing

News Local Sports Business Politics Opinion Lifestyle Entertainment Obituaries Classifieds Autos **Housing** Jobs



Advertise Buy a Home Rentals Commercial Foreclosures Find an Agent Mortgage Guide Senior Living

Home **Housing**

Garage as the getaway

Article by: LYNN UNDERWOOD, Star Tribune Updated: June 26, 2010 - 4:29 PM

Converting a garage to a multipurpose space with rec room, gym, home office or even a bedroom can be a cost-effective alternative.



show

13 **comments**

0

0

Jeff Murphy has a place to play billiards, watch football on one (or all) of his three TVs and serve beverages from a granite-topped bar. It just isn't in his house. It's in his garage.

He still parks vehicles in his 1 1/2-story carriage-style garage, but he's made sure there's also plenty of room to play. On the first floor is a heated "man cave" where he can tinker with his toys -- snowmobiles, personal watercraft, ATVs -- and an automotive-themed bathroom with a vanity crafted from a used fuel drum. Upstairs, his wife, Jill, and their three children often join him to watch movies or play 1980s arcade games. "It's like going to a cabin for a weekend," he said.

The Murphys' home, on Lake Pulaski in Buffalo, Minn., has no basement. So when they added a second garage for storage, they decided to build more than a basic shell.

"After the kids are in bed, I'm out there until midnight," said Murphy,

related content



Jeff and Jill Murphy. Jeff Murphy desined and built his home away fro...
Glen Stubbe, Star Tribune

owner of Murphy & Co. Design, a Buffalo residential design firm. "It's my time to collect my thoughts. I can turn up 38 Special and install a new carburetor on a Jet Ski."

Murphy is among a growing number of garage owners who have taken the typically grungy, cold, cavernous space and transformed it to an inviting retreat. In the past several years, more people have built multifunctional garages or converted existing garages into lower-cost rec rooms, home offices, exercise rooms or even spare bedrooms.

"The garage is the final frontier of the house," said Kira Obolensky, author of "Garage: Reinventing the Place We Park." "People see more opportunities to use this flexible overflow space," she said.

Jim Kuzzy, project manager for Plekkenpol Builders in Bloomington, said he's noticed a rise in the number of homeowners tapping into the often underused space. "Cost-effective garage conversions are an area showing growth even in this economy," he said.

Among the more popular garage remodeling projects he's encountered are main floor combination mud/laundry rooms.

Although the National Association of the Remodeling Industry doesn't track different types of projects, members say garage conversions are on the rise.

"It can be a cheaper alternative to putting an addition on a house to get livable, usable space," said Dave Vinje, owner of Attics to Basements Building and Renovations in Elk River. Vinje is currently working on a project to create a handicapped-accessible apartment for the owner's mother by adding square footage to a two-car garage.

Brian Cornell of Minneapolis gained usable space not from the interior of his new garage -- but from the exterior.

Cornell worked with DiGiacomo Homes and Renovation in Minnetonka to design a fireplace on one side of his new 2 1/2-stall garage to create his version of a French garden grotto. The wood-burning fireplace faces a pergola-covered patio that serves as an al fresco dining space.

The project added about \$5,000 to the cost of the new garage, but Cornell said it was well worth it.

"It's more than a garage attached to a patio," he said. "It brings our family together."

Now that garages have moved beyond simple storage structures, it's likely that we'll see more creative uses for them.

"It's become a unique space in American culture," said Obolensky. "It feels like a stage when the garage door goes up. Anything can happen."

Lynn Underwood • 612-673-7619



Jeff Murphy's lower level workshop. Jeff Murphy designed and built...
Glen Stubbe, Star Tribune



Jeff Murphy's lower level workshop. Jeff Murphy designed and built...
Glen Stubbe, Star Tribune



Jeff Murphy and his wife Jill hit some pool balls in the upper level o...
Glen Stubbe, Star Tribune



Jeff Murphy designed and built his home away from home with two levels...
Glen Stubbe, Star Tribune



Jeff Murphy's lower level workshop. Jeff Murphy designed and built...
Glen Stubbe, Star Tribune

BIGBOYS
toyland

GET PAID TO SHOP

Spend \$350
get a **\$50** gift card

Spend \$200
get a **\$25** gift card

Spend \$100
get a **\$10** gift card

On products like

THE EFFORT-LESS BIRDFEEDER DELUXE

was \$89.95
now **\$69.99**

Get the details ▶

MILLS **FLEET FARM** fleetfarm.com ▶

*Roll Here For Disclaimer
ADVERTISEMENT

more from real estate

Real Estate Classifieds



A Ms. Pac-Man game in the upper level. Jeff Murphy designed and bui...
Glen Stubbe, Star Tribune



calendar of events

Search all events [Advanced Search](#)

- Thu 17 [Linda's Cellar](#)
- Fri 18 [Washburn A Mill Tour](#)
- Sat 19 [Enchanted Atelier](#)
- Sun 20 [The Nature of It](#)
- Mon 21 [Haupt Antiek Market](#)
- Tue 22 [Open blues jam with...](#)
- Wed 23 [Transmission](#)
- Thu 24 [Homeward Bound Rescue](#)
- Fri 25 [New Primitives](#)

more from housing

[Deck the halls with hopes of selling](#)

[What \\$259,900 buys in ...](#)

[Home Plan: Foursquare blends old and new](#)

13 [comments](#)

0

0

From Around the Web [sponsored links](#)

- [10 Gadgets To A Bad@ss Dorm Room \(Discovery\)](#)
- [BlackBerry 10 First Impression: Nifty Features \(USA Today\)](#)
- [Finally Chemotherapy Game Changer for Stage 4 Cancer \(Enviva\)](#)
- [America's Top 5 Football Stadiums \(AARP.org\)](#)
- [The Best Ways to Get Airline Seat Upgrades \(Credit Card Help Topics\)](#)
- [Report: USC players in altercation in locker room after Sun Bowl loss \(SI.com\)](#)

More from Star Tribune

- ['This will be difficult' — Obama unveils sweeping gun violence proposals, sees tough fight \(StarTribune.com\)](#)
- [Rescuers free Oregon woman wedged for hours between 2 buildings in downtown Portland \(Nation\)](#)
- [Ex-Gophers receiver Barker arrested on marijuana charge in Houston \(StarTribune.com\)](#)
- [ESPN anchor Stuart Scott says his cancer has returned, will still work \(StarTribune.com\)](#)
- [Hax: Bestie's unbearable boyfriend is affecting their friendship \(StarTribune.com\)](#)
- [When not to listen to an animal expert? When he says: 'Stand closer to the rhino' \(Nation\)](#)

Search by category

[Tell us about an event](#) | [Tell us about a venue](#)

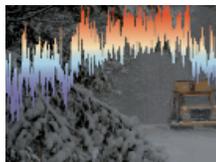
inside the StarTribune

sports



[Star Tribune e-book: Adrian Peterson's Road Back](#)

lifestyle



[INTERACTIVE: Looking at the weather of 2012](#)

news graphics



[Interactive map: Finding best gas prices in metro](#)

home



[Download our high school hockey apps](#)

local



[The Star Tribune on Instagram](#)

home



[Star Tribune offers digital subscriptions](#)

StarTribune

Search the Star Tribu

[News](#) [Local](#) [Sports](#) [Business](#) [Politics](#) [Opinion](#) [Lifestyle](#) [Entertainment](#) [Obituaries](#) [Classifieds](#) [Autos](#) [Housing](#) [Jobs](#)

425 Portland Av. S.
Minneapolis, MN 55488

[Company](#)
About the StarTribune

[Subscriber Services](#)
Newspaper Subscriptions

[Website](#)
Terms of Use

[Buy Ads](#)
Online Ads

[Store](#)
Article Archives

[Connect with Us](#)
Contact Us

(612) 673-4000

Advertising
Directory + Contacts
Jobs at the StarTribune
Newspaper in Education
Tours
Vita.mn: Entertainment
Business Listings

Digital Access
eEdition
Vacation Holds/Billing
Newsletters

Privacy Policy
Ad Choices
Site Index

Newspaper Ads
Classifieds

Back copies
Commercial Reprints
Permissions

Send a press release
 Become a Fan
 Follow Us
 RSS

© 2013 StarTribune. All rights reserved.

StarTribune.com is powered by Limelight Networks

 Newspaper Subscriptions |  eEdition |  RSS |  Newsletters