

## Coming home

A look at the growing trend of urban living and some of the underlying forces helping to build the momentum.

By Lauri Hopple

Urban living is making a comeback. After big population drops in the 1970s, both St. Paul and Minneapolis have seen the number of residents begin to rebound, according to a recent Metropolitan Council population estimate. Inner ring suburbs close to the core are also popular because folks like living close to work, schools, restaurants, shops and family and friends, with a sense of connection to their neighborhoods.

But urban living has its challenges; namely, old housing stock. Sometimes it's worth restoring and renovating, but not always. What happens when homeowners want a new house in an old neighborhood?

More and more builders are helping people with that question as the housing market and overall economy slowly recover from the Great Recession.

DiGiacomo Homes & Renovation has been an urban builder and remodeler for more than 20 years, so we asked for their perspective. Below is an edited version of a conversation with Rocky DiGiacomo, who runs the business with his wife, Gigi.

Q: Take us through how your business has shifted in recent years as more people are re-

much of your business now is dedicated to infill building?

A: We've been in the remodeling and building business for the past 20 years. We still do some remodeling, but based on what most of our clients were asking for we now do mostly new builds. And most of that has been infill building for about the past 15 years.

Q: What area of the Twin Cities is your main focus?

A: We work all over the metro area, but recently we have done more than a third of our infill building in the neighborhood of Tyrol Hills (in Golden Valley). Most people love this neighborhood and want to build there because it's got big, mature trees and it's very bucolic even though it's so close to the city. They get the best of both worlds.

Q: How do you and a homeowner decide against renovating an existing home, choosing to tear down and rebuild instead? What are some of the benefits of starting from scratch?

A: Budget is one of the main considerations. Once you buy the existing property

COMING HOME, 3K



PHOTOS BY PAUL MARKERT



RESIDENTIAL • COMMERCIAL • RENTALS • MORTGA

THE PLACE TO FIND YOUR NEXT, NEW  
Inside: Open House Directory



### Historic Victorian Mansion with Carriage House! Near Hamline University & Light Rail

Zoned as duplex, current use is single family. 2 level carriage house shelters up to 7 cars. 7 bedrooms, 4 baths, 3500sf apx above ground.

**1464 Minnehaha Ave W, St Paul**  
**\$349,900**

Call for showing!



**Cheryl Kempenich**  
Top 1% Locally & Nationally  
Best Marketing Guaranteed!

If you are thinking about downsizing, call me! That is my specialty!

Call or Text 612-735-0553 • CherylKempenich.com

### BUILD. RESTORE. RENEW.

Building Finely Crafted Custom Homes Since 1973

Single Family Homes, Association Maintained Townhomes & Villas

• Locations Include: Woodbury, Hugo, White Bear Township, Afton, and More PRATTHOMES.COM/LOCATIONS

• Build on Your Site - Or We Can Assist in Locating a Lot

• Custom Remodeling We Offer a Full Range of Services

Kitchens that Cook • Great Room Walls to Inspire • Closets that Store and Organize



(651) 429-8032  
PRATTHOMES.COM

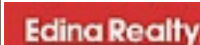


### WOODBURY



### NEW OFFERING 1586 GLENBEIGH PLACE

Comfortable one-level town home living plus a finished walkout lower level. One of the best cul-de-sac locations in the neighborhood with central Woodbury location for convenience to all the city amenities. Vaulted ceilings, skylights and lots of windows for natural light. Quality main floor living including living room, den, sunroom, formal and informal dining, owner's bedroom and patio. Spacious, lower level family room with fireplace, second bedroom, 3/4 bath, patio and huge area for storage and workshop. Oversized 2 stall garage. Association services for a carefree lifestyle. Well priced at **\$295,000**.  
**MLS #4633250**



**Ewing & Hraslich Team**  
www.edinarealty.com

WWW.EDINAREALTY.COM  
**DIXIE EWING**  
651-334-6124



### O'FLANNIGAN OFFERS NEWEST LISTING

20 acres of complete seclusion surrounds this gracious country estate. The site is dominated by towering pines creating a backdrop for the stunning 2-story home with distinctive landscaping including in ground pool. Rare find! **\$1,700,000**



For more information call:  
**651-430-7759** or  
www.oflanningan.com

Expect More...the Madores. Kathy and Lisa Present a

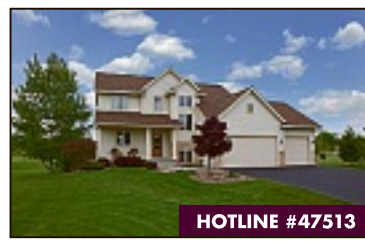


**Kathy Madore 651-592-4444**  
kathymadore@edinarealty.com  
www.kathymadore.edinarealty.com  
**Lisa Madore 651-216-1335**  
lisamadore@edinarealty.com



HOTLINE #47540

**OPEN 12:30-2** Enjoy this comfortable, easy living St. Croix Riverfront home featuring 2.2 acres w/beautiful landscaping and 150' of sandy frontage. Enjoy main floor living with owner's suite and den adjacent, upper level with 3 BRs and walkout level is open w/wet bar, 2nd FP and great views throughout home!  
**1341 Old Toll Bridge Rd, Lakeland**



HOTLINE #47513

**OPEN 12:30-2** Enjoy this property on 2+ acres where you have plenty of room to roam, yet with neighbors in this rural setting just outside of Hudson. This home shines! Compare with new and get beautiful cabinetry, millwork, wonderful windows, stunning tile work in the baths, and finished LL!  
**692 Mary Jo Ct, Hudson, WI**



HOTLINE #47550

**OPEN 1-3** Spacious and traditional 2-story walkout featuring main floor owner's suite with adjacent den, new granite in the kitchen, spacious deck overlooking private 5.45 acres with pond and the walkout level is finished for a complete package of approximately 5000 finished sq ft.  
**13370-51st St Ct N, Baytown Twp**



HOTLINE #57516

**OPEN 2:15-3:45** You will not find another home on the St. Croix River with this Tuscan influence, design and setting. It's stunning with stone floors, wrought iron railings, curved staircases, open volume ceilings and an owner's suite dedicated to its own wing with a wonderful bathroom with amazing shower! Enjoy 3 acres and 149' of frontage.  
**1747 Rivercrest Rd, Lakeland**

CALL OUR 24-HR HOTLINE #9

START YOUR HOME SEARCH



CONTINUED FROM 1K

## > Coming home

and add up all the costs for a remodel, to really get the high-end things you want it usually makes more sense to tear down and build new. It's about a \$650,000 entry point for a quality custom home. It can go higher than that, but on a city lot it's not such a great idea.

But to really get all the things they want and could get in a bigger home in the suburbs, building new is the best way.

Some cities have more restrictive rules and codes, which can actually help us keep things in tune with the streetscape as long as they're not too restrictive. It depends on who's writing the codes.

Sometimes it's about moral persuasion to keep things smaller. One of the reasons you move back to the city is to be closer, so it's good to keep it compact to keep things sen-

sitive to the streetscape.

**Q:** How are you received when you start a teardown and infill project in an existing neighborhood?

**A:** Flak is going to occur no matter what — people are always nervous about what's going up. People who've lived there forever can have a really hard time with such big changes. We always knock on the neighbors' door on the right and the left to show neighbors what's going to happen, talk about the timetable, and so forth, and we try to reach out out down the block, too. But we encourage the homeowners to do their own door-knocking, too, to build those relationships.

**Q:** What are some of the trademarks of a DiGiacomo home?

**A:** Besides trying to be respectful of the streetscape, intelligent floor plans that make more efficient use of space. We often do story-and-a-halfes to get more of a cottage feel and to avoid dominating the neigh-

borhood. They're more expensive to build but they fit in better. ... We also set the home down low in the ground, which allows us to get 9-foot ceilings that most people want on the main floor, plus we lower the basement floors to have high ceilings there, too, with large window wells for more natural light. Making a livable basement makes for more square footage, which is so important in an infill.

Also, cabinetry has to be extremely well-done throughout and planned, tucking storage into all sorts of spaces like the dormer angles so homeowners end up with as much storage as their friends in the 'burbs with their walk-in closets. Good cabinetry costs more, of course, but we rely on it.

And we've started doing something that we've had rave reviews for, called the Drop Zone. Just inside the door, we put open lockers and cubbies for sports stuff, coats and mittens, everyday stuff — plus a true closet at the back more for guests coats. We do a standing-height desk with a pinup board and computer hookups. Somewhere to un-

load the keys, the mail, the briefcase, plus a place to charge the phone and be able to find it the next day. Having a set place for these things makes a big difference.

**Q:** What's the next big thing in urban living?

**A:** A trend that's not here yet but will be very soon is infill housing designed specifically for urban empty-nesters so they can age in place.

Wider doorways, an elevator shaft, no steps on the first floor, all designed for walker and wheelchair use so people can stay in their homes. Sometimes there's a caretaker suite in the basement, which could also be used as a mother-in-law suite or for a returning adult child until they need live-in help. These add a whole other layer to the equation, and I think there's a big future in that.

Lauri Hopple is editor of Spaces magazine, where this article originally was published.

### APTS UNFURNISHED ST PAUL 916

**CROCUS/GRAND**  
1BR \$775+ and  
2BR \$865+ Heat, water, trash paid.  
No Dogs 651-699-4303

★ **EXCEPTIONAL** ★  
★ **SENIOR LIVING** ★  
Just across from Como Park!  
Heated underground parking  
Two elevators. Small pets welcome  
★ 651-489-3392 ★  
**COMO BY THE LAKE**  
901 E. Como Blvd. St. Paul

**HIGHLAND - 651-699-4303**  
Studio \$675+ 1BR \$775+ 2BR \$875+  
Heat water trash pd. Car avail,  
No Dogs

**Woodbury near School**  
3BR/2BA 2 car \$1395  
781-405-3346 av. 8/29

### APTS UNFURNISHED ST PAUL - SUBURBS N 917

**WHITE BEAR** large 1 bd Great  
Cabinets, \$695 651-426-9220

### APTS UNFURNISHED ST PAUL - SUBURBS N 917

**ROSEVILLE 330 W. Cottage**  
1BR \$669-\$689/  
2BR \$799-\$809  
Heat, water, & garbage paid  
Controlled access.  
★ 651-488-2306 ★

### APTS UNFURNISHED ST PAUL - SUBURBS S 919

★ **WEST SAINT PAUL** ★  
Large Apts, balconies, off street  
parking, on bus line, garages available.  
1BR \$735 & up, 2 BR \$875 & up  
\*Call 651-457-6131\*

### APTS UNFURNISHED ST PAUL - SUBURBS S 919

**INVER GROVE HEIGHTS - LAKE COVE VILLAGE**  
\$19 Credit Qualifying Deposit  
for 1 & 2 BR  
1BR Starting at \$754  
2BR Starting at \$804  
3BR Starting at \$1069  
HEAT PAID, Indoor Pool, Sauna,  
Fitness Ctr, Great lake view location.  
Min to downtown St. Paul,  
Mall of America & Airport.  
651-455-2480  
(Limited availability)  
(Some restriction may apply)

**NEWPORT 3BR - \$975**  
Heat Paid. Large Tandem Garage,  
AC, Dishwasher, Sun Deck,  
No pets. 651-768-0602

### APTS UNFURNISHED ST PAUL - SUBURBS S 919

★ **THE RIDGE** ★  
2BR in Luxury building. Indoor  
heated parking, full size washer &  
dryer in unit vertical & mini blinds,  
party & exercise rm.  
1380 Bidwell St. • 651-451-8913

### HOUSES UNFURNISHED 920

**HIGHLAND** ~ 3br/2ba, 2c gar,  
fireplace, large yard. \$1350+.  
1 year lease. Avail. Sept. 1.  
Not Sect 8 apv. 651-778-0602

### HOUSES UNFURNISHED 920

**RENT WITH OPTION TO BUY**  
2 or 3BR. Security dep+\$1000/mo+ Uts  
Immed Occupy 651-488-0561  
Delisle Co.

### CONDOS & TOWNHOUSES 921

**IGH HUGE** single level,  
No stairs! 2BR 2BA, AC dw,  
Indry, garage, deck \$1125  
612-850-3874

**MENDOTA HEIGHTS LILYDALE**  
Spectacular 2BR, 2BA rental unit  
in prestigious  
**OVERLOOK CONDOMINIUMS**,  
1,600 sf, 4 season enclosed solarium,  
gas fireplace, in unit washer/dryer,  
\$1,495/mo. Underground parking.  
Heat included. Elevators, indoor  
pool/whirlpool and beautiful party  
room. All in a park-like setting. No pets.  
Contact Bisanz Brothers for showing.  
651-447-4567

Post your resume online at  
**myTCjob.com**

### DUPLX, DBL BUNGALOWS UNFURNISHED 922

**225 CHARLES**  
Large 3BR  
Section 8 Approved  
\$1200 + uts 651-248-8770

*List Your Home Here & Sell*

**651.225.HOME**

**myTC home .com**

# OPEN HOUSE DIRECTOR

PRICE	ADDRESS	OPEN	BR/BA	AGENT/PHONE	OFFICE
600	West St Paul				
\$224,900	44 Imperial Drive W.	Sun 12:30-2	3/2	Deb Howlett/651-263-2257	Edina Realt
602	South St Paul				
\$214,900	1508 Deerwood Drive	Sun 2-4	3/2	Larry Danich/651-455-2214	Metzen Realt
702	Roseville, Falcon Heights, Lauderdale				
\$535,000	1625 Questwood Drive	Sun 2-4	3/3	Valentina Yarr/612-751-0200	Edina Realt
708	White Bear Lake, Mahtomedi, Dellwood				
\$224,900	1284 Birch Pond Trail	Sun 12-2	3/4	Gary Stoltzman/612-751-0657	Edina Realt
\$489,000	38 Evergreen	Sun 12-2	4/3	Dwight Zaudtke/651-379-4105	K
716	Hillcrest, Dayton's Bluff, Hazel Park				
\$179,900	2211 4th Street E	Sun 12-2	3/2	Brenda Scott/651-260-0058	Edina Realt
720	SE St Paul, Battle Creek Area				
\$224,900	53 Battle Creek Place	Sun 12-2	3/3	Chuck Brooks/612-386-4259	RE/MA
722	Newport, St Paul Park, Cottage Grove				
\$224,000	8389 69th Street South	Sun 12-2	2+1/2	James Meerschaert/612-670-3461	Ec
725	Pine Springs, Lake Elmo, Oakdale				
\$1,199,000	697 Julep Avenue N.	Sat/Sun 12-5	4/4	Wayne Prowse/612-414-0248 www.697Julepav	
726	Woodbury				
\$229,000	6016 Birchwood Road	Sun 12-2	4/2	Dixie Ewing/651-334-6124	Edina Realt
\$287,000	862 Winterberry Court	Sun 1-3	3/3	Patti Lindberg/612.840.6350	Edina Realt
727	Stillwater, Bayport, Marine St Croix				
\$184,000	415 3rd Street N.	Sun 12-2	3/1	Gary Tauer/612-840-8602	(
\$530,000	975 Osprey Drive	Sun 1-3	4/5	Chuck Brooks/612-386-4259	RE/MA
728	Riverview, Cherokee				
\$379,900	648 Delaware Ave	Sun 12-2	5/2	Dave Ross/651-455-3663	Dav
741	Downtown, Capitol Heights				
\$500,000	743 Ashland Ave	Sat & Sun 1-3	5/3	Kate Kirk/952-457-7268	Edina Realt
746	St Anthony, Midway				
\$194,500	814 Ottawa Ave	Sun 1-3	4/1.5	Robert Lentsch/651-407-7810	RE/MA
772	Lexington, Circle Pines				
\$229,000	4551 North Road	Sun 2-4	4+3	Tom Muellner Jr./651-490-5592	Pt vie
785	SW Wisconsin, Prescott, Ellsworth				
\$479,900	W11767 - 497th Avenue	Sun 1-3	4/5	Carol Toner/612-414-5050	(
\$689,900	525 Lake Street	Sun 3-5	3/2	Carol Toner/612-414-5050	(
787	Hudson, River Falls Area, Roberts				
\$224,900	637 No 7th Street	Sun 12-4	4/2	Scott Rudd/715-821-2485	RE/MA
\$238,750	1205 Namekagon Loop	Sun 12-3	4/3	Tom Nielsen/715-381-4222	(
\$394,900	645 Cherry Hill Lane	Sun 12-3	3/3	Tom Nielsen/715-381-4222	CB Burnet

Find your next HOME, CONDO, TOWNHOUSE or APARTMENT

Your complete House Hunting and Home Buying resource in the Twin Cities & Western Wisconsin.

Contact your Pioneer Press Advertising Representative today: 651-228-HOME

**myTC home .com** **TwinCities.com** **PIONEER PRESS**

**O'FLANNIGAN OFFERS**

Little Carnelian home on 5 acres of complete seclu  
Stunning design with over 7,695 sq. ft. of living with excr  
placement of windows for views of surrounding wildlife  
lake. Excellent shoreline with dock. **\$1,250,000**

**O'FLANNIGAN**  
**COLDWELL BANKER**  
**BURNET**

For more information call:  
**651-430-7759** or  
**www.oflannigan.com**