

The background of the entire page is a detailed architectural floor plan in white lines on a blue background. The plan shows various rooms, including a kitchen with a sink and stove, a dining area with a table and chairs, and a living area with a sofa and coffee table. Numerous dimensions and annotations are scattered throughout the drawing.

The Custom Build A SHOWCASE

*DESIGNER
ARCHITECT
BUILDER*

PRESENTED BY
GREAT LAKES BY
DESIGN

The Prairie, Midcentury retreats

Photography: Speckman Photography

Tucked into bosky shoreline landscapes, underneath rich, verdant canopies, two newly built homes in northern Michigan are the product of a unique pair of distinguished custom home builders with more than 60 years of combined design-and-build experience in the region. The teams, Miller, Poineau & Naumes, or MPN, in East Jordan, Michigan; and Mapleridge Construction in Williamsburg, Michigan; are both formative fixtures in an already distinctive northern Michigan building region, which is characterized by vacation cottage styles both traditional and adapted, and lakeside residences that feature innovative technologies and building techniques fit for the mood of modern shorelines. Lakeside areas from Leelanau and Charlevoix to Torch Lake, Glen Lake, and Traverse City host work by MPN and Mapleridge, whether in sleek, modern estates; boulder-clad contemporary beach homes; or timber-framed villas that reflect the serene woods of the region.

For both Chris Miller and Scott Naumes, co-owners of both MPN and Mapleridge, early-career introductions to the construction process in northern Michigan, specifically, marked an entryway into the custom build sphere and all that it entails. Now, their full-service, high-end custom home building firms have evolved into regional mainstays with diverse menus of services, including but not limited to framing, siding, trim work, custom cabinetry and furniture, historic restoration, and construction management. Beside these offerings, both firms are underscored by an appreciation for the unique built and natural landscapes in the region and a reveling in the process of securing lifetime designs into its current evolutions through the custom-building process.



The Lake Charlevoix reprieve

From finishing trim work to installing custom built-ins, Miller's passion for creating new residences culminates in the final details of a project that come together seamlessly with the help of a custom builder. Through MPN's comprehensive list of services and abilities, which include an 11,000-square-foot woodworking and paint shop, these final touches can be accomplished in high resolution and with the utmost quality. MPN's diverse abilities allowed the team to achieve a handful of distinctive stylistic and functional details for a new custom villa on Lake Charlevoix, such as its styled wood structures, finishes, and framing; as well as siding, interior trim work, custom beams, and built-in cabinetry that is featured throughout the entire home.

The homeowners had previously owned a cottage on the same site and when it came time to envision its replacement, in this case a five-bedroom and five-and-a-half-bathroom contemporary nod to more rustic architectural influences, the team hired the regionally renowned designer Andy Poineau to create the design that MPN then built. It is the picture of a family cottage reprieve from the entryway, with its restful, sweeping porch and low-resting columns that

grow into a central gable roofline and its grouping of windows, transoms, and matte black treatments underneath. These provide a sweeping look outward onto the gentle point of the landscape, which was worked by Drost Landscape, out of Petoskey.

"It's on a point; it has great views in the design and we really wanted to make the house have an inside-out feel. The floor systems drop and the patios are all seamless with the grass and they flow right inside," said Miller in reference to the exterior and surroundings. "It gives it just a very clean [feel] like it's been there forever."

The new family retreat takes design cues from contemporary and prairie farmhouse styles especially in the exterior details, with its structure resting almost directly on the ground, according to Miller. Its roof system also fans from the central open gable into wide, low-slung eaves that protect the generous wrapping porch, and build upward into a group of prairie-reminiscent, hipped roof portions in the back of the home.

"It has a modern farmhouse look, with clean sleek lines," Miller said. "[It's] contemporary and creates that cozy farmhouse aesthetic. The very unique and extremely detailed column and beam details through-





out really set this home apart. It really added a lot.”

The beams punctuate the great room interior, layering visually from front to back under white poplar tongue-and-groove ceiling panels, which match the surrounding walls. They descend into the room in neat, linear forms composed partially by mini-columns that are mimicked in longer versions at ground level. These are set on a warm rift and quartered white oak floor.

The rectangular, horizontally layered details are mirrored in the simple, elegant stone fireplace, which features a flamed finish on the front and long linear granite panels custom cut right at the quarry to disappear any seams. The stone and wood forms that surround the great room are custom-formed to fit MPN’s exact dimensional specifications, each crafted and secured by the team; and these factors, especially the remixed beam-and-column system, make the room a personal favorite for Miller.

“I think the great room is my favorite part of the house with the beam detailing; the lighting really just sets it apart,” Miller said. “With the up-lighting and the beams, it’s just an amazing space.”

The open floorplan of the great room—which is spaced to accommodate the whole family—culminates in the open kitchen, for which MPN created a custom range hood

with a textured faux finish that is set against white subway tile, custom-made cabinetry in dark-finished maple wood and brushed silver appliances. More cabinetry work created by the team in Cyprus wood comes together to form the corner-wrapping bar space, which also features a stainless countertop. Other custom aspects in the home are a sauna made of porcelain tile that emulates a driftwood print, and the column styles on the porch that match those characterizing the indoors.

Regardless of the unique, individual aspects that come together to create the Lake Charlevoix villa—and any northern Michigan residence, for that matter—Miller said the team’s ability to customize the residential experience for the clients means that nearly anything is possible within that given project. Diverse ability and infinite outcome make the process and product of the custom build that much more personal and satisfying for clients, and rewarding for Miller and the MPN team.

“That means the sky is the limit for the client and their vision and their interior designer, the home designer, or architect,” Miller said. “It really gives them free reign when it comes to the in-house capabilities that we have. To build and produce anything—literally anything that they want—we can do it.”





The Lake Bellaire Midcentury

The appeal for both builder and client is similar for Scott Naumes, who oversaw the build of the Lake Bellaire Midcentury villa in Bellaire, Michigan, which was completed in 2019. A resourceful tilt is engrained within Naumes' own approach to each of MPN and Mapleridge's services and the custom build process. He receives personal satisfaction from achieving everything on a client's list and then some, with precision and enjoyment in all the fine details and tolerances.

"To me, being custom-built checks all the boxes. It's custom-designed and built to an individual's lifestyle, needs, wants, wishes—all of the above. That's the stuff that we absolutely love," Naumes said. "Anything is possible; it just takes time and money and a client that wants to do it. A good builder is just going to love that, feed off of that, love the challenge and figuring it out, and love doing something different and out of the norm, something special—it's what we like to do."

In the case of the newly built Lake Bellaire residence, there was much to offer in the way of troubleshooting the custom-built vacation spot, which took form on a forested bluff just off the left side of the lake. A panoramic view is a picturesque backdrop for the two-bedroom-and-bathroom, approximately 1,800-square-foot residence, which was designed by Joseph Mosey Architecture Inc. of Northville, Michigan, and crafted from start to finish, with turnkey installation, by Mapleridge Construction.

Its architecture is largely determined by





the homeowners' appreciation for the residential stylings of Frank Lloyd Wright, and as such everything from the undulations in the roof tops to interior proportioning follow suit. Placed on a ridge within the relatively large lot, Naumes' team had an enjoyable challenge to contend with when it came to simply executing the siting of the home.

"They have 10 acres there, so that wasn't a challenging factor; it was more of the location being on top of this ridge that just stopped, and that's where the house is," Naumes said. "Getting the footprint right and the gradient and elevation—you can't raise it too high, but it can't be down too far to make the footprint work—some of that was done through us on site, but a lot of that was done ahead of time with the architect and site-plan. That was the biggest complication."

On the exterior, thin Ashlar stone veneer and Bedford limestone ground the already horizontal nature of the architecture in an earthy materiality, which is complemented by a rusty-hued nickel gap-siding. Generous

eaves in the roofing exude classic Wright architecture, as does the movement of the odd angles and reverse pitches of the roof system over the rest of the home.

These styles and materials merge in a built design that Naumes said is secured to last lifetimes, and it also posited challenges that were keenly solved by the custom build team. Indoors, the home's unique outer shaping complements an already intriguing floorplan that is determined by the relatively small footprint. The entry leads into a hallway that later pools into the main room before pivoting on a hairpin curve that is anchored by the fireplace and faces a single upward swoop into a wall-wide window grouping that maximizes the view.

"The house is truly designed around that spot," Naumes said. "It melts into the hillside and landscape and it really all makes sense once you're there."

Off the living area, a dining nook clad in hickory hardwood and surrounded by cedar plank shiplap and window treatments is an intimately lit side note to the rest of the





tucked away reprieve. The shiplap blends outward into the surrounding kitchen and open main room, tying them together and wrapping the interior in a woody comfort that brings the surrounding scene inside. Similarly, it is the smaller details that blend into the entirety of a custom-built home that Naumes revels in, along with the chance to create unique surprises for homeowners when given the chance.

“I always enjoy telling the client ‘leave it up to me, I’ll come up with something and surprise you,’” Naumes said. “I don’t necessarily do it [without consultation], but I enjoy things like that along with the whole process.”

The custom-building process that is relished by the discerning builder yields a special bond with the client, as communication must be just as secure as the dimen-

sions of a unique roofing display, a secluded hickory dining booth, or a collection of custom-crafted ceiling beams that are unique to that specific home. For MPN and Mableridge, each project offers opportunity for new experiences, challenges, and ways for clients to achieve satisfaction in their ideal built spaces. At the end of the day, it is as much a customized process as a personal one, with good communication—from consultations to those final touches—at the heart of the process.

“It was a great project,” Naumes concluded. “It was a pleasure, because we had good clients and I think to have good clients you have to have good management along with the clients to keep them happy and have good communication. It just was a fun process and a unique project, and it was enjoyable for all.”

