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This beautiful White Lake home was designed to offer a great sense of privacy and a great sense of community.

Relax and enjoy the views

Building a home for one family can be challenging, so what happens when you're building a home for two families to enjoy – MAGIC! Andy Ashby, Ashby Builders, said, "This build was very fun to do. The families worked together and had fantastic communication. They were very good at conveying what they wanted, so we could build their dream."

Everything about building this "train station" inspired home was about maximizing the view of the lake from every room. Every person has their own space, and every space has a view of the lake! Hard to accomplish – you bet – but when you assemble an incredible team it can happen.

The land on White Lake was purchased eight years ago. The team spent a lot of time on the site prior to the build to get the feel for what would be the best placement to showcase the property and the lake. Architect Wayne Visbeen, of Visbeen Architects, shared, "This was probably the hardest site I've ever had to work with, yet the result is one of the most successful projects I've been a part of. "We had to make a lot of decisions on how to position the home so it looked natural and there were special considerations we had to take into account to preserve the wetlands. The result of our collaboration is a home the family loves and is complementary to the natural surroundings," offered Ashby.

The tough decisions didn't stop when placement of the home was decided. Ashby, Visbeen, and Interior Designer Francesca Owings were tasked with creating an efficient, comfortable, private, yet community space! "It's all about upfront planning to build a super efficient home. Preliminary work is so important to make the design come together and work for the client. Especially in this build it was important to proportion things correctly so the space looked right and functioned together", offers Ashby.

Even when there is a plan, inspiration can hit at any time. Ashby explains, "Even when the design is outstanding on paper, there is a time when the client actually stands in their space and asks, 'Could we do this differently?' That's when I get excited. I don't hesitate to bring up ideas to the client. When they hire me, they hire me for my expertise, and in that moment we have the opportunity to make something better than they ever imagined."

One area where inspiration hit was the circular gaming table in the lower level. Owings shares, "The space originally had no life at all. I was able to design the curved booth area to be unique and intimate, and Andy absolutely rocked the

finished product. We finished it out with an “industrial vibe” using old gears from a factory, antique gaming pieces, and other 3-D elements.”

A Great Sense of Privacy

The upper level of the home includes two master wings and a community kitchen, dining, and living area. Each suite has glorious views of the lake. A unique element of the home is that there are no closets. Rooms feature built in armoires and window seats for storage. “The window seats provide the perfect space to place a suitcase and work out of it for the weekend, or for a longer stay, items can be stored away in the custom armoires built by Ashby Builders,” explains Owings. The custom work carries through the master suites in the vanities and bathroom cabinets. “I take pride in our exceptional finish work. What we create with our custom carpentry is really special. I want people to walk in a room, look at the work I’ve done and say, ‘Wow, that is really special.’”

The lower level living space is all about the kids. They have that fantastic gaming area, a kitchenette, and a living space for TV and video. The kid’s living space was another opportunity for Ashby to “up” the client’s expectations. “When we walk through that space the client said ‘Let’s do something extra here.’ So we added beams and a v-groove ceiling. That detailing really stands out and transformed the room into something spectacular.”

All of the kid’s bedrooms are on the lower level. The “bunk room” was another collaboration between Owings and Ashby. The four bunks, divided by steps, each has its own light and special “hiding area” for personal items. The “girls room” was created so that it is possible to have late night chats, or enjoy some personal space to read or just get away. The “boys room” is a reflection of, well, a boy! Locker space for storage, oh yea.

A Great Sense of Community

As soon as you pull up to the home and reach the welcoming front entry, you want to kick off your shoes, shake off a tough week, and start relaxing. You are pulled into the open floor plan that offers many areas to kick back and enjoy the company. The open airy casual vibe is evident and the views of the lake are breathtaking no matter where you’re standing. You can feel that everything about this place is about being one with the outdoors and enjoying the Michigan summers.

We all end up in the kitchen, right? The direction given to Todd Wiley of Tru Kitchens was that the kitchen was to be a “hang out area”. Mission accomplished. You are easily drawn to this casual spot to cook, eat, and enjoy a summer’s bounty. The cooking area incorporates a raised snack bar with a walnut butcher-block top. The space includes two dishwashers – perfect for entertaining – and Viking appliances. It would be easy to miss the refrigerator because it flows in with the cabinetry. Wiley shared, “It is very efficient use of space with fantastic views of the lake.”

The community area continues outdoors where the most difficult decision of the day may be which of the gorgeous areas to go. Perhaps the morning paper and coffee in the screened porch on the upper level, then grab some sun in a beach chair on the upper deck or lower lounging area, then finish with a beverage and meal while sitting in one of the bar stools around the outdoor kitchen. If it's a night that is a little buggy, just mosey on over to the outdoor dining table and lower the retractable screen porch to keep the pests away.

Harder and Warner designed and executed the innovative and easy to care for landscaping that provides the finishing touches to the exterior for the lakefront cottage. When you stand at the water's edge and look back at the home, it looks as if it has always been there. It is a testament to great design and amazing craftsmanship.

The client definitely agrees, *"In a nutshell it was a positive experience working with Andy Ashby because he listened to our unique requirements and followed through to make sure the project represented a high level of quality and craftsmanship. It was the first time I had ever worked with a residential builder who truly looked out for what was in the best interest of the client."*

Ashby's craftsmanship was honed through summers working for his step-father while he attended college to become a high school chemistry teacher. During his six years of teaching, Ashby continued working construction in the summers. Eventually he built his own home and homes for some friends. In 2004, he decided to make his passion for carpentry and building his full-time job. "It was a tough time to start as a builder," Ashby states, "Those hard times forced me to be as efficient as possible and provide as much value as possible for my clients. I like to get inside their head so I can replicate and improve on what they want. It is very important for me to deliver the very best on all my builds, because people are paying good, hard-earned money and they want the best. I do everything I can to make sure that happens and to take it to the next level and in budget. The best compliment I ever received was **'Our home turned out better than what we expected.'**"

Ashby shares, "I try to create show points in every home I build, no matter the budget. Those are the places in a home where people will stop and say, 'Wow, that's really beautiful.'" Ashby said the build on White Lake is one he is really proud of and there are some show points for him: the round gaming area, the look of the upper living space, the bunk beds, and the custom furniture.

Creativity, hard work, and the right team took a barren lot to a place of beauty where two families will create magical summer memories.