

# *Pick a Plan, Make It Yours*

**You've waited your whole life to build the log or timber home of your dreams, so settling for anything less than a knock-your-socks-off-perfect plan for you shouldn't be an option. But that doesn't mean you have to start completely from scratch. Turning an existing design into one that's built around your needs is easier than you think.**



A grand window wall lined in massive hand-peeled logs sits at the center of the lodge style home. An expansive deck shelters the screened-in outdoor living space below.



**ABOVE:** Nestled between the kitchen and great room, the casual dining room is the perfect space to enjoy meals with family and friends while taking in the views through the patio doors.

**LEFT:** The 26-foot ceiling height provides the perfect opportunity to install floor-to-ceiling windows that usher in gorgeous property views, a massive stone fireplace, and log trusses above.

Every step of the log or timber home-building journey is filled with decisions—from the profile and corner style of your logs to the placement of your timbers. But before you can make any of those decisions, you have to draft your floor plan. It's the single most important decision you'll make in the home-building process. Your floor plan determines the relationship of your house to the lot, your rooms to each other and ultimately, how you and your family feel and function in your home.

Still, it can be tempting to settle for a generic plan when faced with the complex process of developing your own. But building a house that looks and lives like the one next door means you'll be missing out on one of the biggest benefits of building: living in a

custom home that's planned around your specific needs, style, budget and property.

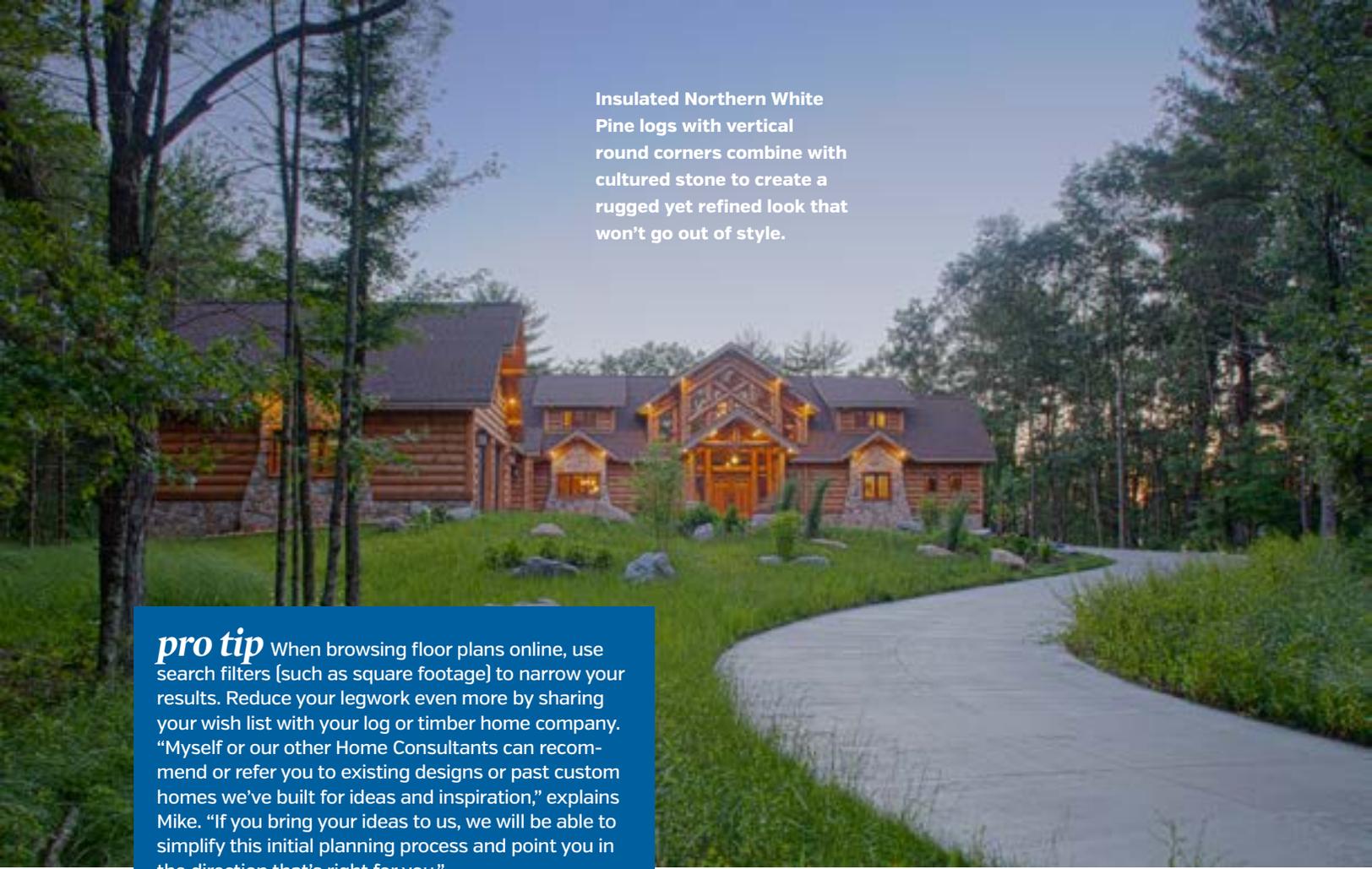
### **START WITH THE BASICS**

If you want a home that fits your preferences and lifestyle but drawing up a plan from scratch sounds intimidating, expensive or just too time consuming, there's a better way: Using a ready-made plan as a starting point and adding your own custom touches. That's the approach Mike Orr, Home Consultant at Wisconsin Log Homes, finds clients drawn to again and again. "Even if you are starting with an existing floor plan, there are still going to be things you want to change to fit your preferences," he says. "Every square inch should cater to the way you live and be unique to you and your family."

Knowing that your floor plan will play a major role in how you experience your home can up the pressure to "get it right." But ignore the urge to begin digging through hundreds of plans in search of "the one." All you need to know is what you want. Once you have a list of must-have features in hand, recognizing plans that don't match up with your needs—and ones that do—is a breeze. Not sure where to begin? Zeroing in on three key areas will help you find a solid plan to start building your dream on:

### **Look to Your Lifestyle**

Knowing how you will use your new log home will guide you to a design that most closely fits your goals. A house that will serve as a full-time residence for two people will be vastly different than one that's used as a weekend



**Insulated Northern White Pine logs with vertical round corners combine with cultured stone to create a rugged yet refined look that won't go out of style.**

**pro tip** When browsing floor plans online, use search filters (such as square footage) to narrow your results. Reduce your legwork even more by sharing your wish list with your log or timber home company. “Myself or our other Home Consultants can recommend or refer you to existing designs or past custom homes we’ve built for ideas and inspiration,” explains Mike. “If you bring your ideas to us, we will be able to simplify this initial planning process and point you in the direction that’s right for you.”

getaway for a big family. Think realistically about your daily life to help you settle on the basics of your new home, such as square footage and where it’s allocated, entertaining areas, the number of bedrooms and bathrooms, as well as additional areas, like outdoor living spaces and storage areas.

After deciding what (and how many) rooms you need, consider how the spaces will relate to each other. Do you want multiple levels or a ranch-style home? Is a centrally located kitchen or a great room with easy outdoor access on your list? Would you like all of your bedrooms in one wing or a private master retreat with lots of separation between sleeping spaces? Nailing down the answers to these types of questions will help you settle on a “starting plan” that meshes with your vision and can be easily modified to fit your lifestyle and personal preferences.

### **Look to Your Lot**

Zeroing in on the key elements of your particular property—lot shape, size and location—will guide you to floor plans that fit your goals. For example, if you need plenty of square footage and are working with a long narrow lot, you’ll want to focus on multi-level floor plans that will allow you to build up, rather than out. If you have a sloping lot, a plan with a walk-out basement may suit your needs best.

Likewise, the interiors should fit your location. Lake views at the rear call for large, floor-to-ceiling windows to capture the view, while a mountain range beyond your front door may mean a front porch full of rocking chairs is in order.

### **Look to Your Future**

Creating a home that suits your lifestyle now is smart but creating a home that

will fit your lifestyle 20 years from now is a wise investment. “Our design team helps clients plan for their lifestyle now, as well as for what their lifestyle will look like in the future,” says Mike. Some potential needs to consider: additional play and sleeping space for future grandchildren, an in-law suite for elderly parents or main floor access to the master suite in the event that stairs become a challenge.

### **TAKE THE NEXT STEP**

Once you have a plan in hand, that’s when the magic begins. Because the possibilities for personal customization are practically endless, only your budget, building codes and personal vision will set the limits. To gather ideas and get inspired, chat with other log or timber home owners about their favorite home features, visit model homes and peruse Pinterest and home



**LEFT:** Rustic cabinetry, wood ceilings outlined with log beams and metal-and-leather barstools combine to create a rustic backdrop in this spacious and functional kitchen.

**BELOW:** This beautiful Outdoor Living Space is conveniently tucked under the deck and accessed through the finished lower level.

design magazines. As you do, jot down favorite ideas, create a mood board online or clip magazine photos to file.

Having an arsenal of ideas to reference will help you nail down the custom touches that will turn your new log or timber house into a home you love—one that's anything but average. To discover which modifications you may want to make, focus first on these key areas during the customization process:

### ***Main Living Areas***

To make the greatest impact, focus first on the most-used areas of home. For most, that will be the kitchen and great room. Ask questions that relate back to your lifestyle: Will the spaces accommodate your family and visitors? How about your furniture?

To settle on the right size for a room, think about what it will be like fully occupied, such as while hosting guests during the holidays. You'll want space for everyone to connect without feeling cramped. Likewise, think about the size of any existing furniture, such as heirloom pieces, that you'll be bringing into the home and adjust room dimensions accordingly.

### ***Outdoor Living Spaces***

Your outdoor living spaces are an extension of your home and are prime for customization. If you want to create more livable space and boost your home's connection to the outdoors, look beyond your four walls. Add a sunroom, screened-in porch or a wrap-around





**LEFT:** This hand-crafted custom log staircase is a work of art in the foyer and makes quite the first impression for guests entering the home.

**BELOW:** A quiet retreat off the back of the home, this cozy space houses the owner's book collection and is a tranquil nook to escape to.

deck to encourage family and friends to kick up their feet and relax. Create extra-deep overhangs above a deck to allow you and your guests to take in the views, rain or shine, and consider swapping a pair of French doors for a folding wall system to encourage seamless flow between the indoors and out.

### **Storage Spaces**

Ample storage space is crucial to the functioning of your new home. Consider how you would like everything from your vehicles to your holiday decor to your off-season clothing stored, and make modifications as necessary to the garage, coat closets, bedroom closets, kitchen pantry and seasonal storage areas.

### **Style**

One of the best ways to bring custom style to an existing log or timber home plan is with wood details, from decorative trusses and gabled ends to stair railings and everything in between. Whether inside or out, the type of wood you choose—from smooth milled logs to rough sawn timbers—and the color of the stain will create a drastically different aesthetic. Lastly, look to customized finishes for walls, floors, windows and doors, cabinetry, plumbing, light fixtures and decor to personalize the look and feel of your home.



# CASE STUDY

# SANDPOINT LODGE

View  
floor plans  
and more  
photos  
of this  
home



Making your own adjustments to a ready-made floor plan can quickly turn the original into a brand-new design. “Some of our clients might begin with one or several floor plans that they are using for inspiration, but then make modifications that will fit their needs and it becomes an entirely different design that’s unique to them,” Mike says.

Case in point is the transformation of Wisconsin’s “Jackson Version II” plan. Beginning as a traditional rustic log home, it was modified to fit the owner’s personal needs, and became a completely new design with a modern timber style—and a new name, the “Sandpoint Lodge.”

Here are a few of the personalized modifications that converted the Jackson Version II into the Sandpoint Lodge:

- An increase of 5,200 square feet, taking the original 5,800-square-foot design to over 11,000 square feet
- The addition of four new bedrooms and three bathrooms, taking the final count to 8 and 8.5, respectively
- The incorporation of a NanaWall retractable-window system that opens up entertaining areas completely to the outdoors
- The angle of the garage was adjusted to fit property setbacks

- A portion of the home above the garage was finished out to create a semi-private space for extended guest stays
- An office was added off the master suite, which offered the homeowner lakeside views

Seeing how one plan can transform into another with careful customization is something that never fails to amaze. “People are always surprised when they see how different a home can look,” says Mike. “It’s amazing what you can accomplish by using different building materials and design arrangements to create a truly one-of-a-kind custom home.”

# CASE STUDY SANDPOINT LODGE



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