



Spring HOME IMPROVEMENT



Special Supplement of the Dodge County Independent and Steele County Times | April 2026

Local cleaning service helps with spring, year-round cleaning

BY KAREN
M. JORGENSEN

When spring arrives, many people begin to think about doing some deep cleaning around the house.

Andrew and Hanah Bonilla say they are available to help with those tasks through their business, Andrew's Pro Clean. They describe their business as a family-owned carpet, tile and upholstery cleaning company.

The Bonillas moved to Owatonna from Duluth five years ago and started the business two years ago. It has proved to be a successful business, Hanah said, and over the last year has earned over 100 five-star customer reviews.

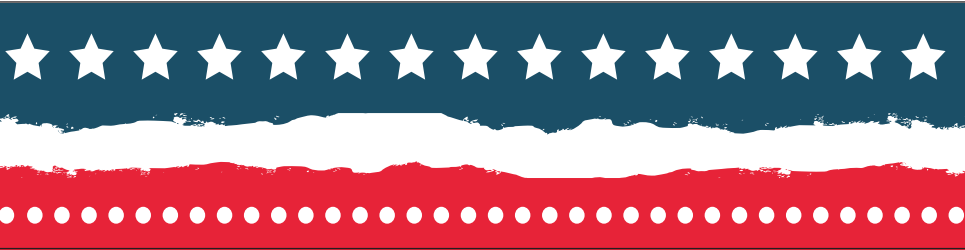
"We've worked hard to build a reputation for delivering consistent, high-quality results and genuinely great customer experiences in an industry where that's not always the norm," she said, adding that "as a local, family-run business, we take a lot of pride in serving our community and building something that goes beyond just a

See **CLEANING** on 20 ►



STAFF PHOTO BY KAREN M. JORGENSEN

The Bonillas by the van that Andrew Bonilla uses to clean carpets on location. A second van, with a truck mounted cleaning system has been set up for their son, Wyatt, who will be joining the family business this spring when he graduates from Owatonna High School.



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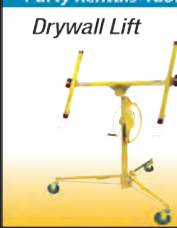

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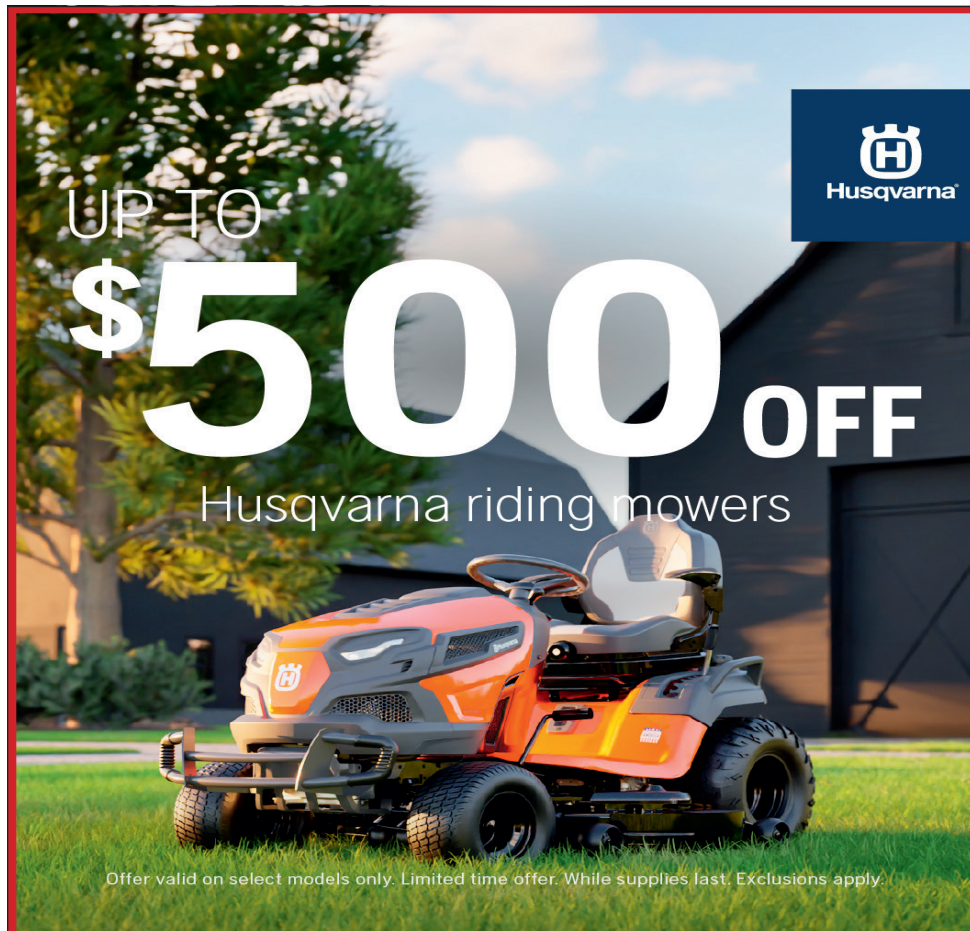
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WOW!

Balzer Crafted Customs offers handyman, remodeling help

**BY KAREN
M. JORGENSEN**
STAFF WRITER

During the COVID-19 shutdowns several years ago, Reid Balzer was like many people and found himself with some extra time on his hands.

Balzer works at Lely North America, a company dealing with robotics for dairy operations, and helps out at his family's Balzer Dairy Farm in Steele County. Still, he felt he needed another outlet and Balzer Crafted Customs was born.

His wife, Eva, explained that he started doing work on their family home but that only lasted so long. He needed more projects or their house would be in a permanent state of remodeling.

He first reached out through his Facebook page and word of mouth and he started getting customers. In addition to doing the handyman jobs, he has now expanded into more remodeling work and taking on larger projects, he said, adding that he has been staying plenty busy through word-of-mouth advertising.

He has now expanded his projects to including "flooring, drywall, furniture, appliances, doors, painting, framing, general home repair and pretty much any odd or end you can possibly think of," he says on his Facebook page.

See **BALZER CRAFTED** on 21 ►



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Since he started his business during the Covid shutdowns, Reid Balzer has expanded and developed a strong customer base by doing a variety of handyman and remodeling jobs.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Reid Balzer works on an entryway. Balzer, owner of Balzer Crafted Customs, has been expanding his handyman business into one that also does remodeling.

Time for spring maintenance on HVAC systems

Lean on professionals, not Google

BY KAREN M. JORGENSEN

No matter if you are a first-time homeowner or have dealt with forced-air A/C units for years, the more information the homeowner has the better they can keep their unit working efficiently.

The most important thing you can do, said Brian Elwer at Tonna Mechanical, is to do some basic cleaning around your outside unit.

Make sure the coil is clean, he said, and that “no animals or other critters” have gotten in over the winter months.

Checking the coil intake is also important, he said.

Another important, cost-effective, and easy tip is to change your filters. These filters are usually located in the furnace and still need to be changed on time to avoid dirt damaging your equipment and getting into your air ducts during the summer. If you’ve looked down your air ducts lately and see a not-so-metallic sparkle it might be time for a duct cleaning.

Doing these things will make the unit work better and your summer more comfortable.

A few other tips from the people at Tonna Mechanical include:

Turning thermostat down

Some might think cranking your thermostat to 60 degrees will make your home colder faster. It will make your home colder, but not faster.

Let’s say while you were gone you set your Wi-Fi thermostat to 80 degrees, and now you’re on your way home and you change it to 60 thinking your house will be nice and cool.

Upon return, you find the regular cold air flowing. What is happening is your A/C will keep pulling the indoor warm air, cool it, and push cold air into your home for a longer amount of time. It will work hard for an extended amount of time straining itself and your utilities to get back to a comfortable indoor temperature.

When things go sideways

If air is blowing through the vents, but it’s the same temperature as outside, or if the unit is unusually loud, you may have a problem. In this case, it’s best to turn your A/C off and leave the fan running. A part of your cooling unit may have frozen up, or there

may be a different issue. This can happen on units that malfunction, when it’s humid while units have been running for an extended amount of time, and on older units.

In this case, your best option is to call a professional for diagnostics and repair to protect your equipment.

Problems on the inside

It’s hot outside. Everyone is sweating, and now your furnace is sweating?

Unless you have a ductless mini split it’s safe to assume your cooling unit utilizes the blower wheel on your furnace. Sometimes condensation can

collect around your furnace because of the humid air that moves through it, Tonna staff says. Sometimes it’s a kinked or blocked condensation line, or sometimes it’s something else. This isn’t something to panic about, but it does need to be addressed. You may have high humidity levels and could use

some recommendations on getting a dehumidifier installed or there could be another problem. It’s best to shut off your cooling unit and furnace and call a professional.

Routine maintenance and promptly dealing with problems can keep one cool and comfortable all summer.





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Minnesota Housing offers home improvement programs

BY ALEX MALM

Spring is in the air, and many homeowners are beginning to think about different home improvements they hope to make, before winter is quickly upon us. While one of the major factors is having

enough funds to complete improvements, Minnesota Housing has various programs for people to potentially use. One of those programs is the Fix Up Home Improvement Loan Program. “Whether you need to make necessary repairs or simply want to update your home, a Fix Up loan may be able to finance most home improvement projects for eligible borrowers,” the description on the Minnesota Housing website states. “The Fix Up loan’s fixed interest rates and extended See **IMPROVEMENT** on 21 ►



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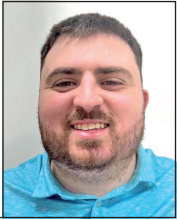
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Millennial learns about home improvements the hard way



Outside Perspectives

ALEX MALM

Neither my wife nor I come from a lot of money.

We had very limited money to purchase a home, but after paying close to a mortgage payment every month on rent, we decided quickly after moving back to Minnesota that we would be best off finding a home to buy.

We quickly fell in love with a home built in 1902, in one of the poorest neighborhoods in the metro.

To us, the home was beautiful. It has plenty of space, a couple of original stained-glass windows, and an awesome front deck. As my co-workers can attest to, I am almost always certainly talking to them on the phone from my deck.

A few years ago, the previous owners lost the home to foreclosure, prompting an investment group in

Minneapolis to purchase it and flip the home.

The home came equipped with many new things, but as us Millennial first-time home buyers quickly found out, there are always home improvements needing to be made - especially in a home built before my great grandparents were born. And those projects aren't very cheap.

I will start with the current projects on hand, appliances.

I may only be 30 years old, but I will say, I would much rather go back to the days before appliances became so ridiculous when it comes to technology.

As I mentioned we purchased our home on a flip. We expected that maybe, the investors weren't putting a lot of money into the appliances; but we also didn't expect them to be a technological nightmare.

Shortly after moving in, we learned our stove top didn't work, so that had to be replaced right away with a technologically advanced stove and oven unit.

Our refrigerator was brand new thankfully; but installing the water and ice machine - something my wife will not live with-

out - required my dad's assistance when he visited from Rhode Island that summer.

Our dishwasher broke soon after moving in, and then only to find out a few days ago, the second one we purchased, it would appear the main computer system for it fried, so we are looking at a costly fix.

Upstairs we have our washer and drier in our bathroom.

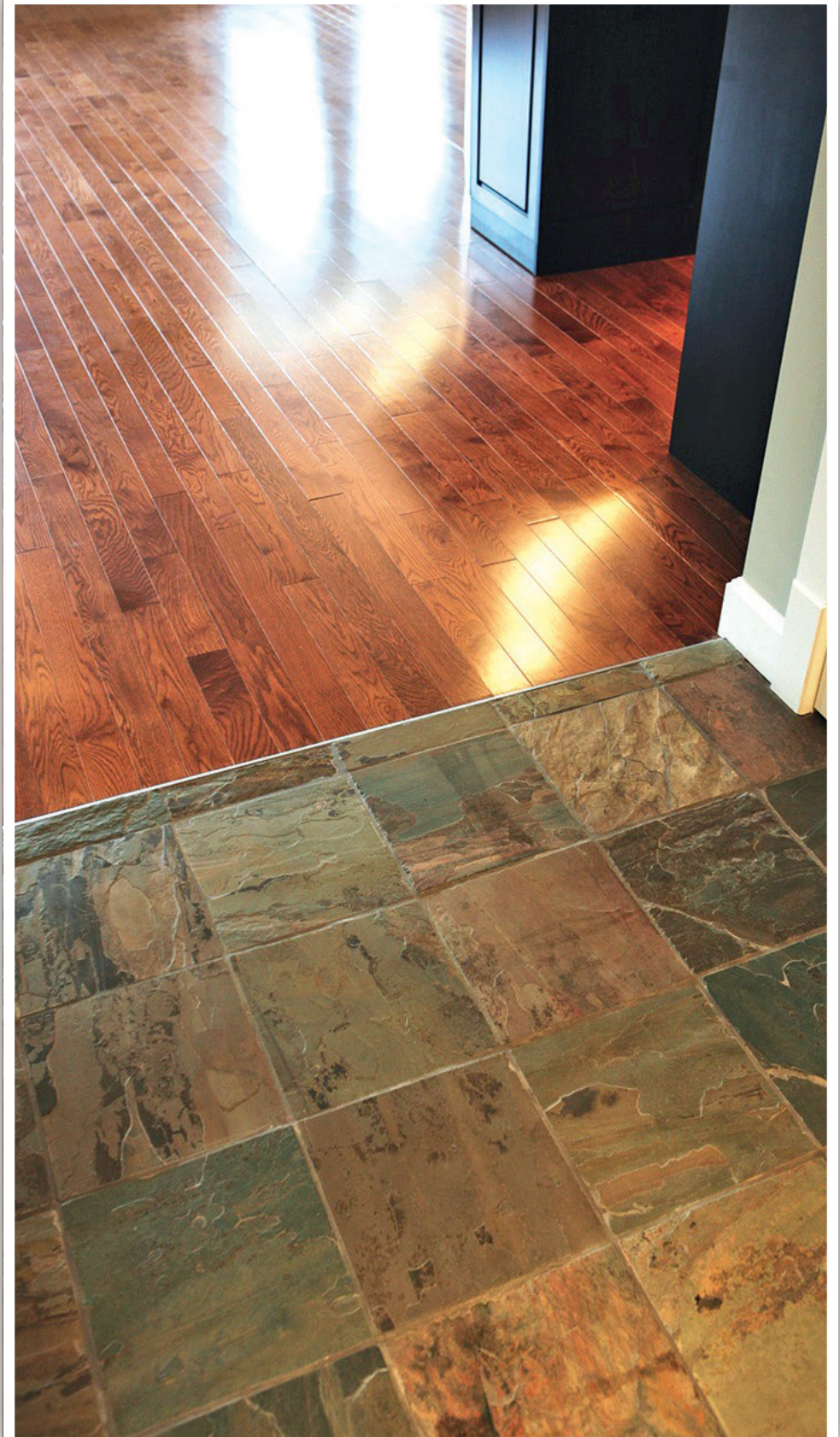
I am not a fan. I don't know about all of you reading this, but I like my clothes to actually be dry when I put them in the drier. But the one that came with the house, has features which decides on its own when its dry and at what degree it is dried enough.

Oh yeah, turns out our washer is beyond repaired to be fixed, I will be opting to purchase an old school one.

While appliances have been a hassle since moving in, we have come to learn, we will have many more major projects to tackle, in hopes of improving our home.

On the top of my wife's list is building a garage. She will tell just anyone whether they ask or not.

See **MILLENNIAL** on 21 ►





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SUBMITTED PHOTO

A carpet and couch cleaned by Andrews Pro Clean. The company cleans carpets, tile and grout, area rugs, upholstery and leather.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Area rugs that have been cleaned. Area rugs are taken to the company location for cleaning and returned to home or office.

Local cleaning service helps with spring, year-round cleaning

◀ **CLEANING** from 2 service; we're working to create a trusted name that people immediately think of when they need help."

Andrew said that in Duluth he worked in a corporate job, selling propane. But, he said, he was more of a "hands-on" person and wasn't really happy in a corporate office environment. His Duluth job often had him traveling to the southern Minnesota area, including Owatonna.

It was five years ago the family made the decision to move and they planned for it to be somewhere south of the cities, maybe the Northfield area, he said. Ultimately, he said, they found a house they liked in Owatonna.

"We love it here," Hannah said. "It's a great community."

The goal, Andrew said, was not to move and start a cleaning company.

Andrew said he was doing landscaping after they moved to Owatonna and at one point, he just bought a carpet cleaning machine. He liked cleaning, he said, and then decided he needed a better machine. One thing led to another, he said, and since he liked cleaning, Andrew's Pro Clean was born. "We just went for it," he said. It started as a part-time weekend job and "it just kept growing."

The company, the couple said, has expanded from a two carpet cleaning machines to having a

van and heavy-duty equipment. They have a powerful truck-mounted hot water extraction system and premium, safe, cleaning solutions, Andrew said. The truck-mounted system, he said, reaches deep into fibers and removes dirt and allergens that portables leave behind.

He stressed that all the chemicals the company uses are safe, 99 to 100% "green."

This is important, he said, as cleaning chemicals, especially those used professionally, raised many health concerns and "a lot of carpet cleaners died, in part because of the chemicals."

He said he found a mentor in the business who sells him safe chemicals and he also has gone to training with others in the industry. "People in this industry are very helpful," he said.

They do both commercial and residential cleaning. They will do cleaning as a one-time job or, especially in commercial environments, on a maintenance basis.

Andrew said they also clean area rugs, both synthetic and wool, and upholstery and leather.

For area rugs, he said, they are usually taken to the company location at 26th Street for cleaning.

Currently, the couple said, it is a two-person family operation with Andrew doing the cleaning and Hanah taking care of the business end of answering

the phone, talking with customers and handling the bookkeeping.

That is about to change, they said, as their oldest son, Wyatt, is a senior at Owatonna High School and will be joining them when he graduates this spring. Wyatt has been working at Fleet Farm, his father said, but has also been helping out with the cleaning business. They will soon be getting him on board and "we have a van ready for him." He also is planning to attend classes at Riverland, Andrew said.

Their younger son, Porter, Hanah said, is currently a freshman at OHS.

"It's been really good to us," Andrew said of the business. Currently they do cleaning in Owatonna and a radius of about an hour away.

Andrew said he has plans for the future and at some time, would like to have a larger space for equipment, cleaning area rugs and the office end of the business. That, however, is "still a way off,"

Responding to customer calls and questions in a timely fashion, Hanah said, is an important part of their business.

They also have set rates for their services, she said, with no "upcharges."

They can be reached by calling or texting 507-508-8894, email at hello@andrewsproclean.com or online at www.andrewsproclean.com.

Balzer Crafted Customs offers handyman, remodeling help

◀ **BALZER CRAFTED** from 5
He has also added a maintenance program to his work.

Most people, he said, have no clue about all the maintenance that needs to be done on a home and often it doesn't get done until serious problems turn up.

A year ago, he said, he started a new service offering the homeowner peace of mind that their home will be taken care of, on time, for a set monthly price.

He said with the program he will build a custom home mainte-

nance schedule and price package that includes a monthly check-in.

Every package will include a yearly home inspection to identify any other potential issues that may need to be addressed before major damage occurs.

Starting new businesses is becoming a normal part of life for Balzer and his wife.

While Reid Balzer mainly concentrates on the handyman and remodeling jobs, the family has also expanded in dog boarding and daycare. Balzers Barnyard Board-

ing and Daycare opened last summer, operated by Eva. That business has also expanded, and Reid Balzer is now busy with the design and construction of an additional building on their property that will be used to house the dogs.

He said he currently shares his workshop area with the dogs, and he needs his area back.

To talk with Reid Balzer about Balzer Crafted Customs call 507-218-2031. The boarding and daycare business can be contacted at 507-421-1513.

Millennial learns about home improvements the hard way

◀ **MILLENNIAL** from 16
She grew up in Minnesota, so she always had a garage. My in-laws when they moved to their farm, when she was in high school, made sure to build a huge, heated garage as soon as they moved in.

I, on the other hand, grew up in a state where no one ever really parked in the garage. It was rare to know anyone who parked their cars in the garage. Every once in a while, a buddy's dad would have a sports car or something they parked in the garage, but the regu-

lar commuter cars stayed outside.

We do not plan on going anywhere, so we will get ourselves a garage one day. I am just hoping we can get a driveway first soon.

Another major project I want to tackle is our backyard.

What I would like to do is have mostly cement and a huge patio around the backyard, with things like a firepit built into it.

This is still an ongoing debate. We have a decent size yard for being in the middle of the city, but my wife isn't all that con-

vinced we should give up most or all of our grass.

Overall, though, we are getting used to spending our Saturday mornings day dreaming at Menards about projects we are going to get to. Making home improvements helps bolster the neighborhood.

As people make even small changes to their homes, people notice, and I am sure other couples or roommates are also thinking "what should we do to our home next" after they see other work being done.

Happy home improvement season everyone.

Minnesota Housing offers home improvement programs

◀ **IMPROVEMENT** from 15
repayment terms (up to 20 years on some loans) mean monthly payments that may fit your budget."

Some of the program features include the following:

- Loan amounts from \$2,000 to \$75,000
 - Loan terms vary from 1 year to 20 years
 - Fixed interest rate
 - Level monthly payments over the term of the loan
 - No downpayment required
 - Secured and unsecured loan options
 - Little to no equity in your home required
 - Income requirements for Fix Up loan program
 - No income limits for the Accessibility loan program
 - Finance projects already started, or that were completed within the past 120 days
 - Hire a contractor or do the work yourself
 - No prepayment penalty
- For example, the income limit for Dodge/Olmsted counties is \$172,100 as of last year, according to the Minnesota Housing website.
- It is the same for the 11 metro counties, and \$152,000 everywhere

else in the state.

There is also an owner-occupancy requirement meaning you have to live in the home for the term of the loan.

Some examples of potential eligible projects include:

- Porches and decks
 - Bathroom or kitchen remodels
 - Basement refinishing
 - Furnace, boilers, water heaters and central air conditioning
 - Windows and siding
 - Insulation
 - Roofs
 - Tree removal or trimming, or property regrading
 - Septic system repairs or replacement
 - Mold and radon mitigation
 - Accessibility improvements
 - Garages
 - Home additions
 - Accessory dwelling unit
 - And more
- Energy Loan Plus
- Another program offered through Minnesota Housing is called Energy Loan Plus.
- "Make energy-conservation-related improvements to your home using a home improvement loan with a low interest rate," the description

on the Minnesota Housing website states. "Funds are limited and might go quickly – contact a participating lender to see if you qualify."

Some of the program features include:

- Loan amounts from \$2,000 to \$30,000 with both secured and unsecured loan options
- Loan terms vary from 3 to 20 years
- Fixed interest rate with level monthly payments over the term of the loan
- Little to no equity in your home required
- No prepayment penalty

Like with the fix up program, the income limitation for \$172,100 as of last year according to the Minnesota Housing website.

It is the same for the 11 metro counties, and \$152,000 everywhere else in the state.

Eligible projects include:

- Windows
 - Insulation
 - Heating & cooling systems
 - Water heaters
- For more information about the different programs and how to apply visit mnhousing.gov/home/homeownership/improve-your-home.

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