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GREAT LAKE STORY

Chapter One

On Manchester Pond: The Site

A thoughtfully built, custom-designed home begins with a dream. Integral to making that dream a reality is finding its ideal setting – those elements of space that embrace your vision of a private haven. This is particularly true if the dream encompasses a water-loving lifestyle.

When BLUE's 2014 Great Lake Story homeowners came across the nearly five-acre pond on a wooded lot in the established Manchester Hills development of Cascade Township in Greater Grand Rapids, they knew they'd found "The One."

Builder Dave Morren, owner of Insignia Homes in Grand Rapids, understood their passion. "The clients fell in love with this waterfront lot, which has always been a personal favorite of mine," he recalled, noting that local home designer Jeff Visser of J. Visser Design tailored a strategic plan that takes full advantage of all the land has to offer.

This included designing daylight windows to maximize the home's exposure to natural sunlight and situating the house to make the most of scenic views. It also included fashioning remarkable outdoor gathering spaces anchored by a fun-for-all-ages pool overlooking the site's tree-fringed pond.

Although site preparation required removing many of the lot's original trees, the pool was an important component for the homeowners' six children. For this project, Tom Rooks of Ada-based Rooks Landscaping in West Michigan was brought on board to ensure the site's original character was not only maintained, but also enhanced by precise pool placement and natural landscape elements, such as the sloping steps leading swimmers down to the property's key splash attraction.

The site also inspired Visser to design side patios that don't obstruct the flow of natural sunlight into the home's lower level.

"That's why it's always important to be involved in the process of 'siting' the home," he shared. "You really need to experience the site itself – walk it, see what the views are, know what the homeowners like and don't like, get a sense of their taste, understand their wishes and priorities and then use that information to come up with something unique for them on that specific site."

While a dream starts the process for projects like this pond-side retreat and design ensures it's an achievable goal, the united efforts of talented experts in varied disciplines are needed to realize the vision. Insignia Homes and J. Visser Design present a well-established history of such collaboration; their seamless teamwork blends the expertise of myriad skilled craftsmen to breathe life into their clients' dreams.

Visser has a particular affinity for waterfront home designs that fulfill a client's wishes and integrating best aspects of each individual site; his firm's work can be found all along Michigan's West Coast, while Morren's discerning team at Insignia Homes represents the industry's best. Recognized for organization and efficiency as well as expertise, Morren offers clients a harmonious blend of budget and design – irrespective of project size.

Follow this exceptional team and discover other key partners who bring this dream at Manchester Hills to fruition in Michigan BLUE Magazine's upcoming special COTTAGES edition. Learn more about Great Lake Story at mbluemag.com.

ILLUSTRATION BY GARY W. ODMARK