

A photograph of a modern two-story house with a large outdoor patio and garden. The house has light-colored siding and large windows. The patio features a dining table, a lounge area with a fire pit, and a large umbrella. The garden is landscaped with various plants and trees.

Neighborhood Commons

NARI MINNESOTA - 2025 ROTY AWARDS



Project Overview

Project: Neighborhood Commons

Category: Residential Landscape Design / Outdoor Living \$100,000 to \$250,000

Neighborhood Commons was designed as the ultimate entertainment space for cooking, relaxing, and gathering with friends. It features a hot tub for year-round enjoyment, a cozy fire table, outdoor dining, and a wood-burning firepit beneath a striking pergola. A custom pizza oven elevates cooking, while a bubbling rock and lush trees create a private, oasis-like feel. Combining comfort, function, and style, this backyard is equally perfect for lively get-togethers or quiet family nights, offering a versatile retreat tailored to the family's lifestyle. Every detail was designed to bring people together and make the outdoors as inviting as the home itself.

Client Needs & Wants:

- **Dedicated Entertainment Area** – Designed to serve as a welcoming space for gatherings and social events.
- **Outdoor Kitchen & Grilling Station** – A functional and stylish cooking area for family meals and entertaining guests.
- **Custom Fire Feature** – Adds warmth, ambiance, and a focal point for evening relaxation.
- **Casual Lounge Space** – A comfortable retreat tailored as a “guys’ hangout” while still versatile for the whole family.



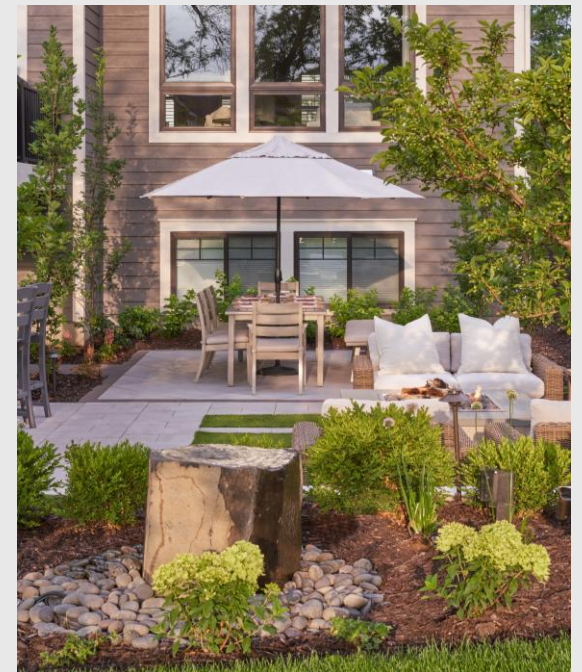
Before Photos

Renderings



Functionality

- Strategically planted white pines along the corner lot to create natural screening and a sense of seclusion
- Positioned the water feature on a central axis from the main living room, aligning seamlessly with the turf stepper path for a cohesive visual connection
- Installed an underground drainage system beneath the patio to capture excess surface water and direct it toward the low point of the property
- Selected porcelain pavers for their modern aesthetic, complementary color palette, and long-lasting, easy-care qualities





- Chose plant varieties that thrive in full sun and accommodate the property's high-water table, ensuring long-term beauty and health
- Created a clean, contemporary aesthetic balanced with warmth and comfort to make the space both stylish and livable
- Aligned turf squares and the water feature along the main axis from the living room, providing visual continuity and enjoyment from both indoors and outdoors

Aesthetics

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Craftsmanship/Innovation

- Adjusted and reconfigured the deck steps to create a direct, seamless flow into the backyard. This allowed the outdoor kitchen to be thoughtfully integrated into the landscape, serving as a functional transition between the deck steps and the dining area
- Engineered a metal support frame to suspend the bar countertop, achieving a sleek, open aesthetic



Project Challenges

- **Strict Setback Restrictions** – Worked within a 30-foot rear setback from the wetland, with only patios permitted to encroach 4.5 feet, while all major features such as the pergola, hot tub, and outdoor kitchen were required to remain outside the setback zone
- **Hardcover Limitations** – Designed the space to comply with the 30% maximum hardcover allowance
- **Challenging Site Conditions** – Addressed consistently wet ground conditions by engineering and installing an extensive subsurface drainage system beneath the backyard and patios to ensure long-term stability

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Before & After



Before & After



Before & After



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