

# The Log Living Gazette<sup>©</sup>

Morningdale Log Homes LLC.

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## ABOUT US

Morningdale Log Homes LLC. is the area's only Authorized Representative for Timberhaven Log Homes LLC.  
Our service area includes Western Pennsylvania, and Eastern Ohio.

## UPCOMING SCHEDULED PUBLIC EVENTS

- Sat. December 31, 2016 and Sun. January 1, 2017, 1PM-4PM: **Open Model Home**
- Sat. January 28 and Sun. January 29, 2017, 1PM-4PM: **Open Model Home**
- Sat. February 25 and Sunday February 26, 2017, 1PM-4PM: **Open Model Home**
- March 10-12, 2017, **Log and Timber Home Show** (Monroeville Convention Center, PA)
- March 24-26, 2017, **Erie Home and Garden Expo** (Erie Convention Center, Erie, PA)

## WEBSITE

Haven't visited our website in awhile? Well, you are missing out on a wealth of information! We now have Live Chat, an Events page, a Blog page, back issues of our ever-popular Log Living Gazette<sup>©</sup>, and more information on Timberhaven Log and Timber Homes including access to hundreds of floor plans and Timberhaven's Design Center. Plus, we are adding more information and features monthly!

## **Designing Your Log Home**

*By Art Hoffman*

*Are you contemplating buying a new log home and are confused by all of the options? What are some basic guidelines to follow?*

We are very frequently asked by our Clients for guidance on what to specify in the log home plans and what to look out for. Having had several custom homes built for ourselves over the years, Kathy and I fully understand the confusion and apprehension one experiences as they plan their new home design, whether it is a conventional home or a log home.

In this article, we hope to pass on some of the knowledge that we have gained from our own experiences as well as those gained from working with our Clients. To simplify this discussion, we have taken each critical portion of the home and listed items to consider for each. This allows you to use this article as a checklist while you sit down and design the features of your new log home.

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- **Foundation**

- Today there is a wide variety of foundations available including concrete block, preformed concrete panels, poured concrete and insulated concrete forms (ICFs). The following table is intended to serve as a comparison guide only. We do NOT endorse one product over another and this table is based on information we have researched and may be subject to change.

FOUNDATION TYPE	RELATIVE COST	RELATIVE TIME TO COMPLETE (1=Fastest)	WINTER CONSTRUCTION SUITABLE?	R-VALUE (Approx.)
Concrete Block	\$	4	N	2.2 – 3.0 **
Precast Panels	\$\$	1	Y	12.5 – 23.0 ***
Poured Concrete	\$\$\$	3	N	1.35 *
Insulated Concrete Forms	\$\$\$\$	2	Y	20+ ****

\* 1993 American Society of Heating, Refrigeration, and Air-Conditioning Engineers' Handbook

\*\* The Schundler Company, P.O. Box 513 Metuchen, NJ 08840 (website, 12/04/16)

\*\*\* Superior Walls (website, 12/04/16)

\*\*\*\* Building Science Corp. (website, 12/04/16)

- If you are contemplating having a finished basement at some time, you should consider that in your selection of foundation type as well. Finishing a basement requires that you install a vapor barrier on the wall as well as furring strips to attach your finished wall material. These items will cost you in material and labor. An advantage of the Precast Panel and the Insulated Concrete Forms systems is that the furring strips and vapor barrier are already included so you do not have to buy and install them!

- **Old Age/Handicapped Accessibility**

- 36" wide doors and hallways to accommodate future mobility devices,
- Consider having kitchen, living room, laundry and Master Bedroom/Bath on the main floor to avoid the need to use steps,
- Consider an "open floor plan" to minimize hallways and corners,
- Raise outlets to about 18" above the floor (it is easier to reach for elderly),
- Use "rocker" switches instead of standard toggle switches (easier if disabled),
- Any standalone shower should have a low entry to prevent tripping,
- Install gripper bars at the bathtub and shower to prevent slips and falls,
- Avoid the use of faucets with knobs – consider lever ones,
- Avoid door knobs – consider lever-style locksets,
- Consider a higher profile toilet.

- **Electrical**

- As you do your daily routine, carry a copy of your home plan and imagine being in your new home doing the same tasks – where would you like your switches and outlets? Mark them on the plan.



- You can never have too many outlets, so plan well. We suggest one outlet under every window – it makes decorating easier, especially if you want to place candles in the windows.
- Want to save money on heating and cooling? Think about where you would like ceiling fans installed and mark them on the plan.
- Don't forget outdoor outlets – place at least one every 8' or so on any porches or decks. Also, place outlets outside the garage (if any), at any daylight basement entry, and near any rear door.
- If you have a loft, consider a sleeper floor and use it to route wires and cables from one side of the home to the other. If you do so, we suggest adding one more row of logs above the second floor level to accommodate for the sleeper floor.
- What about where you will place your furniture in that Great Room or Loft area? Consider some strategically placed floor outlets where a sofa and end tables may be located, etc. This saves having unsightly extension cords running everywhere.
- If you are going to finish your basement, consider running plastic tubing (about 2" diameter) from your electrical room to your HVAC room (if separate) or any workshop, etc. This will allow you to run any needed additional wiring easily without having to tear through walls or ceilings later.
- **Plumbing**
  - We love PEX – it is easy to work with and does save energy. If you do use PEX, label each valve at the central manifold so you can readily determine what each controls.
  - ALWAYS use frost-free spigots for any outdoor spigots including those in the garage.
  - Have water-conserving toilets installed, but first research their flushing capability as some such toilets are prone to plugging up.
  - Specify that braided stainless steel faucet and toilet supply lines be used. These cost very little more than plastic or steel lines, but they are far less likely to burst or leak and they are very flexible, making them easier to install.
  - If you will be on a septic system, we strongly recommend you take extra effort to properly care for it, otherwise you could encounter a messy and costly repair. Some simple things you can do to protect the life of your system are:
    - Have an effluent filter installed on your tank when it is put in. A Zabel® filter is one such brand. These inexpensive (under \$300) devices are intended to keep solids from entering your drainage field where they can clog your field and reduce the system's life.
    - Particles, especially from synthetic fabrics, are not digested by the bacteria in a septic system. Instead, they flow into your drainage field where they accumulate and can ultimately cause your drain field to lose its effectiveness. To minimize this accumulation, we suggest installing a drain filter onto your washer's drain pipe. One such device is the Filtrol 160® and costs about \$160. It installs with simple hand tools in less than a half hour and has a replaceable



- and washable filter. We recommend having two of the filters handy – one in-use and the other to switch out as you clean the other when it becomes dirty.
- Routine maintenance for a septic system is simple as well – just have your tank pumped at least once every 2-3 years. This simple, yet critical, task costs around \$300 and is an absolute necessity to keep your septic system performing as it is intended. *And when the tank is pumped, do not forget to have your effluent filter cleaned as well!*
  - **HVAC**
    - It is recommended that you keep the humidity inside your log home between 25% and 50%. To do this, you will need a humidifier – the best type being a central humidifier sized for your home's square footage. Also, if you use a wood, coal or pellet stove during the winter, consider putting a pot of water on the stove to add humidity to the air,
    - Most log homes have many beams and other features that cannot easily be reached to routinely dust. To minimize the need to frequently dust, we recommend the use of a HEPA filter in your central HVAC unit, and change the filter at least every 6 months, preferable every season (4x/year).
  - **Windows**
    - Skylights are a nice feature, but their placement is also important. For skylights in a high ceiling, consider getting the crank tool that allows you to open/close them from floor level. There are motorized skylights, but their reliability from our experience is dismal and they are very expensive.
    - As you select where to locate any skylights, consider how the sunlight will enter the room from the skylight at various times of the day – will there be a glare on your television, favorite chair, computer monitor, etc? If need be, adjust the location of the skylight or consider a skylight with a built-in adjustable blind.
    - A wall of glass windows, such as in a prow, yields breathtaking views from inside. However, they are usually fixed pane windows so they do not allow air flow into the room. We suggest considering reducing the height of the lower fixed pane windows and installing awning windows of matching width under those windows so you can get air flow anytime you want.
    - Another item to consider if you will have a wall of glass windows is blinds, especially for southern exposures. The heat coming through a wall of windows can be tremendous and is great in the cold winter months, but definitely unwanted in the summer. To minimize this heat, we suggest considering rollup blinds made with a woven material that can be bought in varying transparencies and colors. These blinds will provide you with heat and sun blocking as well as the ability to still see through them.
    - Windows also have a significant effect on energy usage. Consider specifying the best windows you can afford because they will pay for themselves in energy savings. The best windows are low-E, tilt-in (for easy cleaning), and vinyl or aluminum clad.



- **Flooring**
  - Due to the potential for dampness in a basement, we recommend that you take care and make certain your basement does not have any leaks, damp spots, etc. If the basement is dry, then tile, vinyl flooring or engineered hardwood floors can be installed. Always make certain some form of moisture barrier is under any flooring before installing it as this will save you expensive issues later if floor moisture becomes a problem.
  - Another thing to consider is radiant heat in the basement floor. It will keep your basement cozy in the cold weather and it helps prevent moisture issues as well!
  - What type of traffic will the floor in a certain area be subjected to?
    - For bathrooms, mudrooms and entryways we suggest tile as it is durable, water resistant and easily cleaned.
    - For bathrooms, consider a heated floor. During new construction, these are a relatively inexpensive add-on and you will find they are a nicety to have.
    - For Great Rooms with wood fireplaces, consider a slightly distressed floor. Should an inadvertent log fall onto the floor or a high heel or random stone dents the floor, you can easily mask it by using a black permanent marker.
    - If you have pets in the home, consider a hand-scraped wood floor. It is less likely to show claw marks.
    - If you have a loft and will use it as an office, will you be using a desk chair on wheels? If so, consider installing carpet or a rug in that area because you will otherwise annoy those below you with the constant rolling of the desk chair on a hardwood floor.
    - When considering tile, we suggest you check with your local floor and tile supplier for left-over tile from commercial jobs. These can be as much as 90% off list price and are far more durable than residential tiles. All you need to do is ensure you have enough tile for the job. We recommend adding 15% to the square footage to cover breakage, etc.
- **Fireplaces and Wood/Pellet Stoves**
  - What is a log home without a fireplace or wood/pellet stove? If you are selecting stone for your fireplace or chimney, we suggest you consider an artificial stone that closely looks like real stone. This stone has mica or quartz particles embedded in it that gives it the “twinkle and glitter” just like real stone, and it is dazzling when lit by a spotlight at night!
  - Instead of using one of those fire-retarding mat-like products under or in front of your standalone stove or fireplace, consider using tile. It is durable, fireproof and colors can be selected to better compliment your floor and any stone work.
  - If you will have a fireplace mantle, do not forget to have an outlet above it for any Christmas decorations, television, etc you may place on or above it.
  - Also make certain you put outlets on both sides of any fireplace. You will be surprised how often you will use them, especially for the holidays.



- If you will be having stonework exposed on the outside the house, we strongly urge that you have it professionally sealed after a couple months of exposure to the elements. Most of these sealers are guaranteed for twenty years or more and they do help prevent acid rain and erosion damage. Plus, they also bring out the color of the stone. This is inexpensive protection of your investment and costs about \$200-\$800 to be done.

***DISCLAIMER:** The products, opinions and suggestions contained in The Log Living Gazette© are based on the independent, first hand experiences and/or research of the author(s) and are not meant to be product endorsements. It is recommended that the reader carefully read and understand the respective manufacturer's instructions and literature. It is also strongly recommended that the reader try any methods or materials contained herein to determine their suitability for use and if they yield the desired results.*

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#### **Construction Disclaimer**

Timberhaven Log and Timber Homes, LLC. (TLH) manufactures log and timber home building components and provides building materials packages for the construction of such homes. TLH and Morningdale Log Homes, LLC. (MLH) do not provide construction services of any type. It is crucial that the person(s) building the log home have sufficient knowledge and experience to construct the home, independent of TLH and MLH, and also secure the necessary licenses, permits and approvals.

