

Hometown Deck Builders Publishes Guidance on Soil and Deck Foundations

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SLINGER, WI - September 08, 2026 -
Hometown Deck Builders has published guidance on how variable glacial soil conditions across southeastern Wisconsin affect site assessment for residential deck construction. The guidance addresses why two properties on the same street can require different foundation approaches.

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation Geotechnical Manual describes glacial till as a heterogeneous mixture of soil and rock fragments carried and deposited by a glacier. That heterogeneity is the defining characteristic of the ground across much of the region, and it is the reason soil conditions cannot be assumed from one property to the next.

Washington and Waukesha counties sit within the Kettle Moraine, which the same manual identifies as the most prominent interlobate moraine in the state. It formed at the contact between the Lake Michigan Lobe and the Green Bay Lobe of the retreating ice sheet.

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources describes how the resulting landforms took shape. Kettles formed where buried blocks of ice melted and left depressions behind. Kames formed where meltwater washed till into cracks in the ice, leaving mounds that emerged as the surrounding ice disappeared.

The practical consequence is that a well-drained gravelly rise and a poorly drained depression can sit within a few hundred feet of one another. Soil that drains quickly and soil that holds moisture through a wet spring can both occur on a single residential lot.

"People assume the ground is the ground, and across this part of the state that is simply not true," said Tyler Anders, Owner and Founder of Hometown Deck Builders. "Two houses on the same road can sit on materially different material. It is the reason a site visit comes before a drawing rather than after one."

The United States Department of Agriculture publishes soil survey data through its Natural Resources Conservation Service, and that data is available to the public. Property owners can view named soil series, drainage classifications, depth to seasonal water table and slope for a defined area.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service also publishes engineering interpretations for mapped soils, including natural drainage and frost action ratings. Those interpretations were developed for construction and infrastructure planning and are drawn from decades of field survey work carried out under the National Cooperative Soil Survey.

The Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission has published a soil survey covering Washington County, including maps of physiography and drainage patterns across the county. The Wisconsin Geological and Natural History Survey holds additional survey material for Washington and Ozaukee counties.

Site conditions inform the decisions that follow. Where ground holds moisture through the season, drainage becomes a design consideration rather than an afterthought. Where slope is significant, access for equipment and the approach to grade both change.

Framing material selection sits downstream of the same assessment. The company builds deck substructures from wood, pressure-treated laminated veneer lumber, steel, aluminum and composite framing, and the selection depends on the size, height and intended use of the structure alongside the conditions of the site.

Steel and aluminum framing hold their dimensions through temperature and moisture cycling, which suits structures where long-term movement is the primary concern. Wood and pressure-treated laminated veneer lumber remain widely used and appropriate across a broad range of residential projects.

"The framing is the part nobody sees after the first day of the build, and it is the part that determines how a deck ages," Anders said. "The decision belongs at the beginning of a project, at the same time as the layout, rather than being treated as a detail to settle later."

The company's design process begins with consultation and planning, followed by design development that accounts for the property itself, including slope, access and the position of existing doors. Three-dimensional modeling is produced during that stage, allowing changes to be made before materials are ordered.

Permits and approvals follow design development and are handled as part of the project rather than left to the homeowner. Requirements differ between municipalities across the region, which is one reason the sequence matters.

Surface material decisions come later in the process and are largely independent of what sits below. Composite and PVC boards are produced in a range of colors and profiles, and that selection is driven by design preference and exposure rather than by ground conditions.

Property owners who want to review soil information for their own address can access the Natural Resources Conservation Service Web Soil Survey directly. The tool allows a user to define an area of interest and generate a report for that area at no cost.

Hometown Deck Builders is a family-owned and firefighter-owned deck builder founded in April 2019, operating as Hometown Deck Builders. The company designs and builds custom composite and PVC decks, pergolas, covered and screened porches, three season rooms and outdoor living spaces for homeowners across southeastern Wisconsin.

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