

# the Interior Designer

An Affordable,  
Practical Luxury

**The metamorphosis** of new home construction and remodeling through the decades has drastically altered the way we perceive and live in the interiors of our homes. With the influx of big-box stores, the advent of HGTV, architecture and design magazines, a fascinating array of innovative and affordable finishing materials, and the ever-evolving Internet, consumers have become much more savvy about their home environments.

Those who were referred to as “decorators” in the 1950s have, in the 21st century, become “interior designers” – a much more appropriate, not to mention well-earned title. The difference between decorators and interior designers is that interior designers graduate from accredited four-year universities. In addition, they have to pass a mandatory examination to become certified and to practice as licensed professionals. Interior designers are governed by councils, hold licenses (varying by state), and are expected to gain continued educational credits for the remainder of their careers. Interior designers hold accreditations to ASID (the American Society of Interior Designers) and IIDA (the International Interior Design Association), which hold them to strict professional and ethical guidelines. Decorators are individuals who can apply the common principles of coordination and/or possess the innate ability to beautify a space, whereas interior designers are educated and trained professionals qualified to make calculated decisions as to the most appropriate materials, products and applications that will properly benefit the end user. They are also well-versed in applicable building codes, laws and the required permits that guarantee health, safety and welfare in both commercial and residential spaces.

Building or buying a home is the single most expensive purchase you will make in a lifetime. Most people don't realize that an interior

designer can actually save them money as well as help them develop a budget and stick to it. An interior designer can help homeowners avoid overspending by pointing out areas in the home that can be downplayed as well as those that deserve to be highlighted.

Purchasing a new “starter” home that you plan to sell within the next couple of years will require many important decisions in order for you to gain a return on your investment. Did you know that the plumbing fixtures you choose could determine how fast your home will sell on the market when you list it? And that the type of covering you hang on your windows can save you money on your heating bill? Interior designers understand all of these things and more, including the principles of color and how it can make a room feel larger, how installing even the most inexpensive tile on the diagonal will make a room appear more elegant, and how smaller grout lines are more contemporary and easier to keep clean. Experienced interior designers are very familiar with construction costs, product price points, and necessary man hours needed to perform tasks, and they will continuously educate you during the building or remodeling process about products and services so that you understand exactly what you are receiving for your dollar.

Working with a professional can also help protect your investment. An interior designer is trained to recognize unethical behavior from dishonest tradesmen, making sure they hold a current license, checking to see if any formal complaints or legal action have occurred in the past or are pending. An interior designer will also make sure that all tradesmen carry adequate insurance coverage to protect the homeowner from liability due to damage, theft or injury on the jobsite.

Most importantly, it is the interior designer who can project manage your jobsite to insure that all the necessary tradesmen are accounted for on a daily basis and are staying on track to produce the desired outcome.



Making sure all of the details that were discussed and approved on paper come to fruition during implementation is more than half of the battle. Building a new home or taking on a remodeling project can be one of the most rewarding experiences you may ever have, but the harsh reality is that there is also significant potential for miscommunication between the homeowner and the tradesmen performing the work. What once started out as a cordial relationship can quickly take a turn for the worse if someone feels they are being treated unfairly. Interior designers have the ability to mediate should any issues arise, but they ultimately work for the client, so when called upon, they can provide all professional documentation to minimize responsibility on the side of the homeowner. In the world of home construction and remodeling, any tradesman who has failed to collect a debt has the right to put a lien on the homeowner's property, but it is the interior designer who can help inform clients of their rights and guide them through legal procedures while providing all the necessary facts and figures about the project.

Interior design professionals specializing in custom kitchen and bathroom design are educated in anthropometrics and spatial relations, which helps make tasks such as washing dishes or cooking easier for years to come. Building or remodeling a kitchen is the largest project in a home, requiring hundreds of decisions. It is a proven fact that it is the kitchen and/or bathroom that will guarantee a return on your investment, so it is well worth the time and investment to consult with a professional on everything from flooring to cabinets to countertops. An interior designer will advise you, for example, that maple wood cabinets will impress a potential home buyer more than an oak wood species, and that a distance of 36" inches between your kitchen island and countertops is code, but 42" will be more comfortable when two people are cooking. They can tell you that placing at least one cabinet without doors in a kitchen design will make it appear more custom, or that white appliances are almost guaranteed to eventually turn yellow – avoiding this could save you money when it comes time to sell.

Hiring an interior designer to work in conjunction with your builder and/or architect can guarantee that proper space planning and adjacency issues will be worked out before you are forced to live with a mistake. Properly placed traffic patterns will ensure that all furniture walls adequately accommodate either new or existing furnishings and

that you will never have to pass in front of the television to get to the bedroom. An interior designer will make sure that the thermostat will not be located above the sofa where artwork should hang, and that the toilet isn't visible from the dining room table.

Do you know your particular style, or will you know it when you find it? An interior designer can help you understand and achieve the look that you want on the exterior or interior. Certain periods of homes dictate certain exterior paint colors. If you buy an existing house in an historic neighborhood and plan to paint the exterior, your paint colors may have to be presented to a board or council who protects the integrity of that period. In the interior, a designer may propose that you paint a traditional brick wall white to reflect your contemporary style rather than just placing your furnishings around the traditional element. It is the goal of your interior designer: to have all of your possessions complement the exterior as well as the interior style of the home so you will not suffer from the "time warp" effect upon entry.

An interior designer will help you answer the endless questions from countless contractors, tradesmen and salespeople. He or she will help you with quoting materials, ordering products, shipping, delivery, warehousing, inspections, damage claims and returns – all while passing along designer discounts and getting you into establishments that do not sell to the general public.

Hiring an interior designer is not just for the wealthy – it is for those who want to make the right choices for their investment. An interior designer's goal is to supply all of the resources and necessary information so the homeowner can make educated decisions. Interior designers are there to remind homeowners of their initial vision and help guide them to a cohesive finish that reflects their own, personal style and respects their budget. Interior design is not about spending money and buying expensive, new products and materials. It's about adding pieces to complement existing ones by following age-old guidelines. Your personal interior space is your refuge from the harsh realities of the world and should be a representation of who you are. It should inspire you with its natural beauty and make you feel it was designed specifically for and around you, bringing together all of the wonderful parts and pieces of your life.



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Shane Inman, president and founder of The Inman Company, an interior design firm that focuses in both commercial and residential markets, earned a B.A. in Interior Design from Michigan State University. His career began in San Francisco, where he specialized in custom kitchen and bathroom design. He later served as director of design for a Fortune 500 company on the East Coast, specializing in luxury homes.

In Traverse City, Inman's resumé includes both residential and commercial projects, among them the Hagerty Insurance Headquarters. He was lead sponsor and event designer for 2007 Traverse Symphony Orchestra Ball and event designer for the 2007 Traverse City Film Festival.

Shane is a certified interior designer by NCIDQ (National Council for Interior Design Qualifications). He is also a member of the American Society of Interior Designers (ASID) and the International Interior Design Association (IIDA).