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Locally, I'm seeing a lot of good homes from a lot of good builders, but the problem is people don't hire interior designers on the front end. By default, this makes the builder the interior

designer.

People often need to redo kitchens and bathrooms; fortunately for them, these are the rooms with the highest return on investment.

I also notice that people seem enticed to build larger homes than they can afford and their interior details suffer.



An Inman Company-designed kitchen and dining area.

So they end up doing "Home Depot chic." However, HDTV and Shelter magazine have educated all of us to spot Home Depot fixtures and finishes.

I have clients who purchase homes for \$500,000, then put \$1 million into them because they enjoy good design. In the kitchen, for example, we won't use tile, but maybe galvanized metal. In the bath, maybe we use barrels or repurposed hardware.

The 21st century footprint is always an open floor plan where the kitchen, eating, gathering areas are combined. People are working at home and monitoring their children. In Traverse City, we knock out a lot of walls to achieve this footprint.

I have two types of clients: Design-savvy clients that ask for less square footage, but nicer fixtures and finishes, or the client who sees everything as a

cost. One is money, money, money, how much is it? The other has a wish list and spends according to plan.

There's a lot of psychotherapy that goes into design.

For my East Coast clients, everything is gray, stainless and glass. Furniture is very small and there's not a lot of it. Since one-bedroom apartments can be \$1 million or more, contemporary design is popular because it's less expensive; you don't need moldings or casings. It's cut and dry.

People are also loving transitional furniture that is utilitarian. You don't do matching suites.

With each project, both here and in New York, I always start with the foyer because it sets the stage to the entire home. It's your first impression. I also like to focus on the powder bath because you can express yourself here and show some creative freedom.

For renovations, no matter what the client wants, I suggest they save their money to do the kitchen and bath first. These rooms always make you the happiest.

Trust me, it pays to hire someone to help you make these decisions. Five percent of every remodel is usually spent on mistakes. You think I'm expensive? Wait until you make your first mistake. You will lose your sanity.