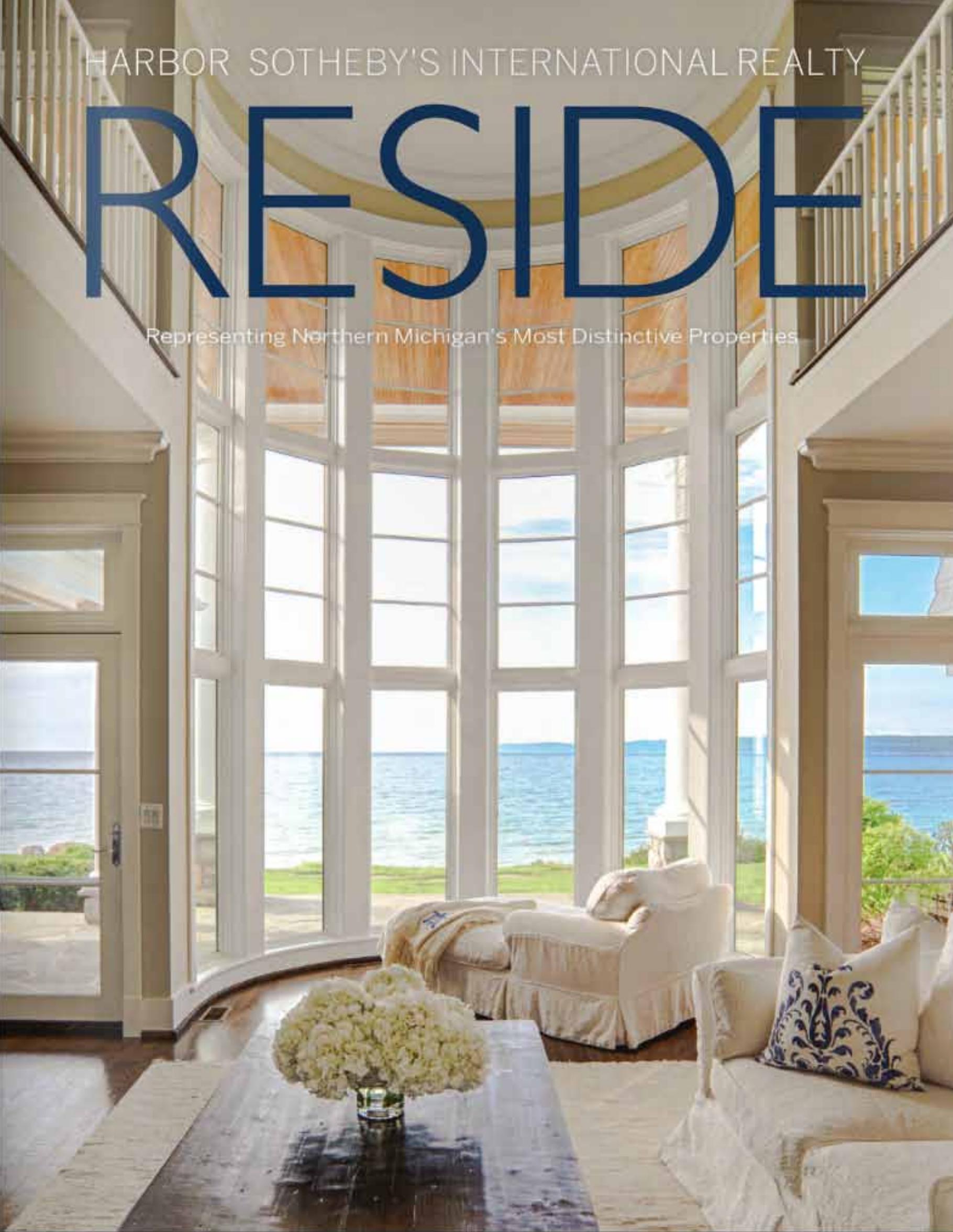


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The Timeless Kitchen:

A Stage, a Performer, a Venue for Memorable Gatherings

By Liz Firebaugh, CKD

I am often asked about incorporating the latest trends into a kitchen design. But, kitchen trends come and go; colors, finishes, and materials fall in and out of favor. Though, some trends are considered timeless and are not affected by changes in taste and style. A kitchen design that has longevity is focused on those elements that are here to stay. Here are several of my consistent recommendations for design elements that have evolved, but have definitive staying power.

Pantries

Walk-in pantries, always a coveted kitchen feature, are moving beyond storage into the realm of the multi-purpose task room. Countertops, sinks, built-in cutting boards, appliance storage and even food prep have changed the way we view this footprint. The redesigned pantry can even act as a service kitchen, and makes a staging area for serving or keeping the real mess out of the kitchen. And, this re-imagined pantry requires good lighting for a variety of tasks.

Message/Docking Center

Message areas located near or in the kitchen can feature a desk, a file drawer for schoolwork and appliance warranties, a message board for reminders and schedules, and even a pencil and paper, because yes, we still need them in this automated world. But, electronics are here to stay; accommodating them during the design phase can greatly impact their convenience and function. The house security controls, music access, and a docking station for smart phones and tablets all fit nicely in the message area, and a docking outlet near the cook or prep area can be used for online recipes.

Drawers

Drawers, drawers, drawers: they are everywhere. Never again will something be out of reach, pushed into the far corner of dark cabinet. Deep drawers hold pots, pans, and dishes. Microwaves and refrigerators are now found in drawers, and even most sinks (but not the farmhouse style) can accommodate a drawer specially made to accept the plumbing chase. Drawers are easier to organize and clean, and they become work-savers with one easy-open action, instead of two when opening a roll-out in a cabinet.

Good Lighting

Under cabinet lighting for tasks on the kitchen countertop is a must. Lighting inside cabinetry as well as inside drawers is another new way to “open” up the space. Decorative lighting above the island or peninsula is beautiful and functional and can reflect a current trend, and then can be easily changed out for a new look. Lighting on dimmers is always a nice ambient touch.

Maximize Storage

Maximize lower storage, because the higher the space, the harder it is to access. Upper cabinets, sometimes to the ceiling, can be utilized for glassware, seasonal dishes or serving pieces not used everyday. Storage tricks utilize the toe kick space for low drawers or toe kick step ladders. Increasing backsplash depth and adding sliding doors creates storage, while still allowing for standard countertop depth when doors are closed. A designated cabinet for trash and recyclables is a popular request, and an automated opening is an innovative feature. Custom drawer inserts stow knives and utensils, while narrow pull-out cabinets can store spices and oils or serving trays, baking sheets, and cutting boards. A good layout balances maximized storage with function and aesthetics.

As a kitchen and bath designer, I am aware of industry trends before they emerge. I can say from experience that the genuinely timeless elements of kitchen design are those that not only please the eye, but also save time, reduce work, and increase convenience. Styles change, but the best elements, such as those above, are here to stay.



Working with a Kitchen Designer

By Liz Firebaugh, CKD

American kitchens are many things: workrooms, assembly lines, family meeting places, and entertainment centers. To meet varied client needs, my role is to work as an artist and facilitator, guiding the process and often influencing the outcome, using a bank of client information to determine what is best for the job. Decisions are based not only on decorative style, but also on lifestyle, and I will take into account a wealth of details gleaned through conversation, informal drawings, photographs, or a list of client wishes and must-haves.

To initiate the design process, I might ask:

- » Is the kitchen in a primary home or an extended family cottage?
- » Does the household have children, or is it composed of an active single or empty nesters?
- » Is dinner a sit-down affair, or do household members come and go on different schedules?
- » Tell me about entertaining. Are gatherings small and casual or large and formal?

Every detail counts in the final design, and it helps to communicate well and often. It is through this process that design ideas come to life.

Good design follows the rules, but knows when to bend. Likewise, as a kitchen designer, I provide my own guidelines, but also those of the homeowner. I love pulling together their dreams and ideas, while nurturing their vision into a practical reality. A well-designed space evokes the homeowner's personality and follows the dictates of good design technique. Kitchen design is a process that takes the workaday room into the loftier realm of interior design. The designer kitchen looks great, works smart, and turns heads.