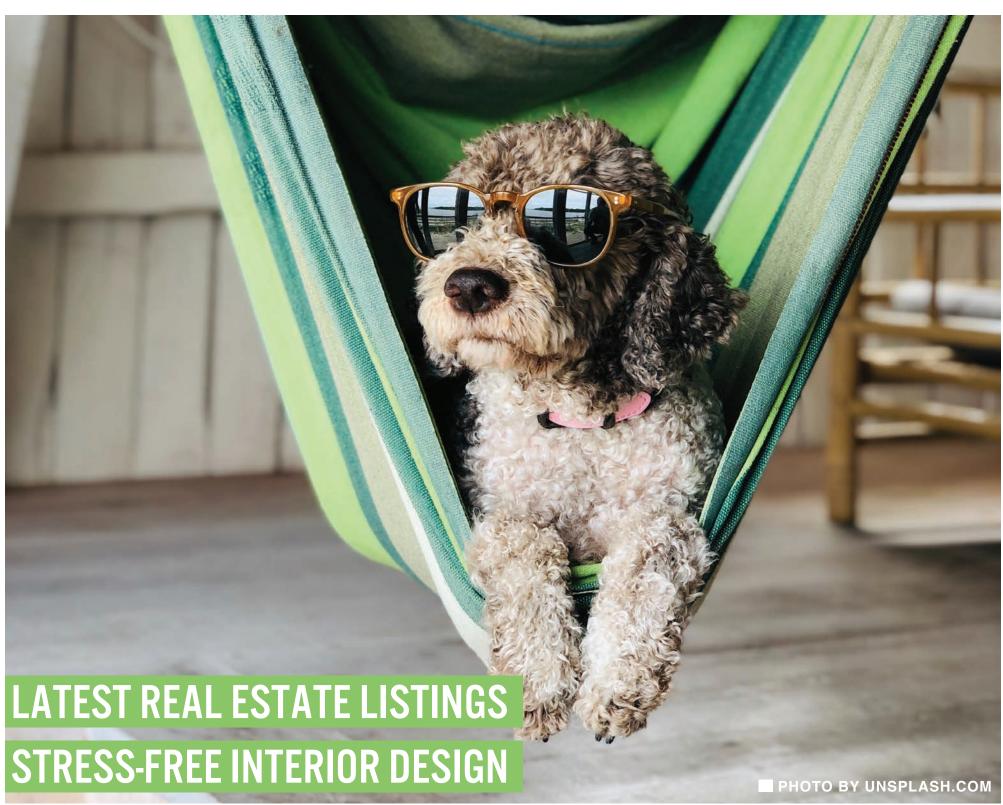
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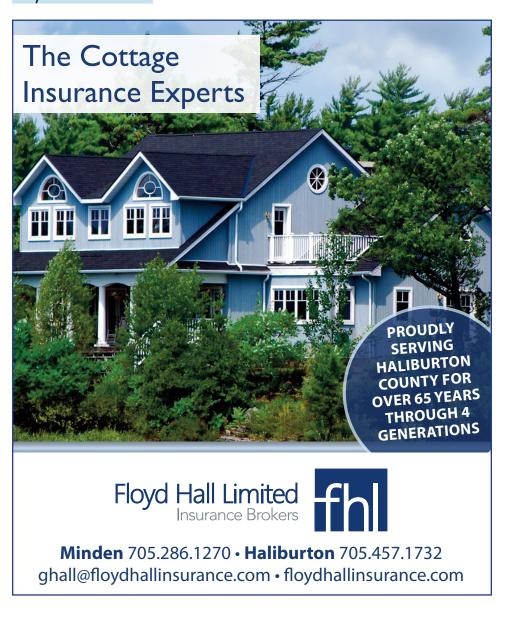


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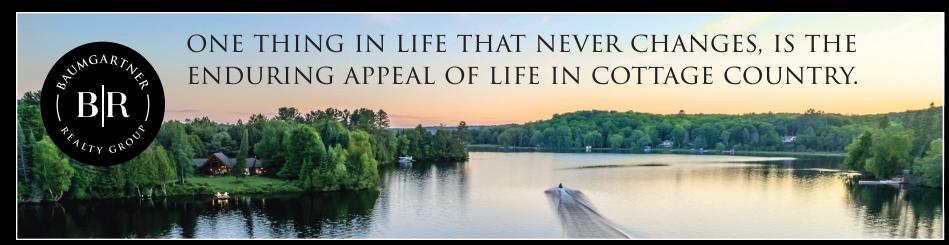
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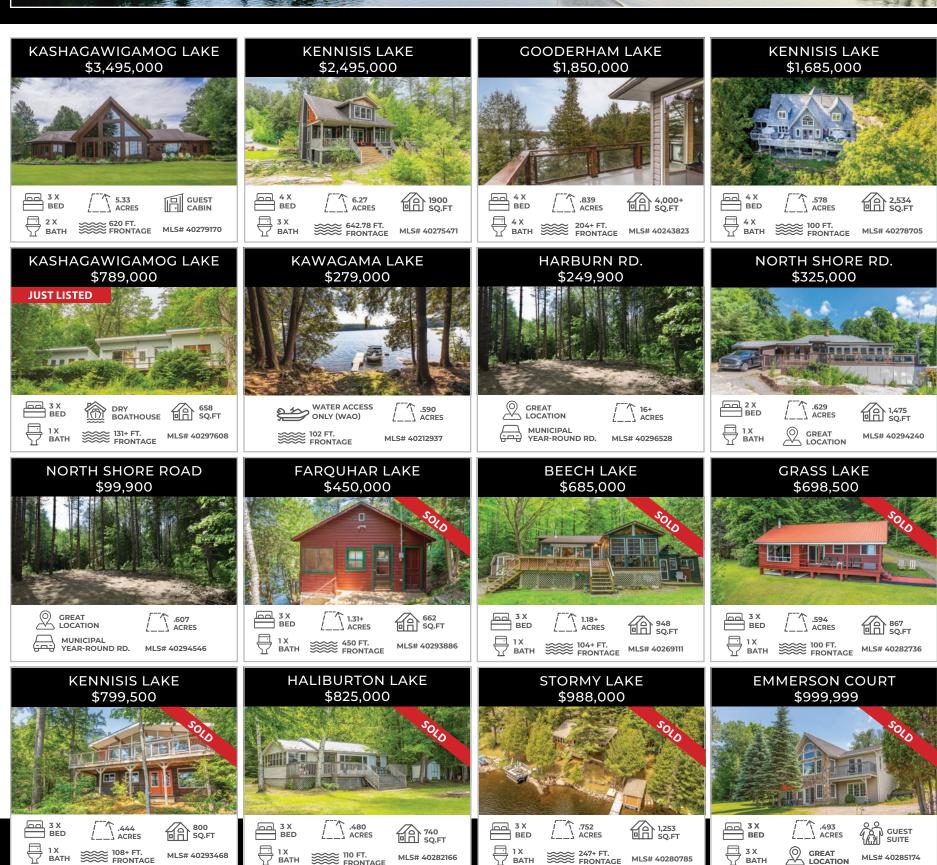


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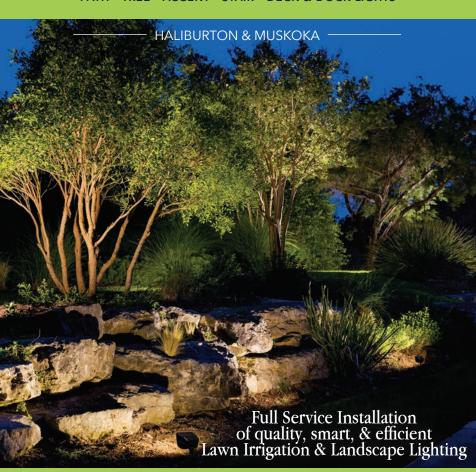




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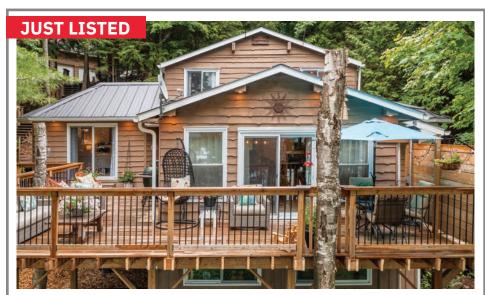
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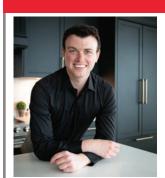


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Our Priorities are Your Priorities...



Interior designers can project manage for you but also provide do-it-yourself tips.

BY MIKE BAKER

While many homeowners may fancy themselves as interior designers, securing professional help with a renovation or redesign could be the difference between success and failure on your next major project.

It's been a busy two-year period for Haliburton County's interior design professionals. With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, people have been spending more time than ever within the four walls they call home.

Whether it's long-time owners seeking a change of scenery, or recent buyers wanting to put their stamp on a new property, the Highlands' remodeling market has been kicked into overdrive, so much so that those working in the industry are finding it hard to keep up.

"It's been a crazy, crazy run these past couple of years. There's been a huge demand from local residents looking to refresh their space, and even more from newcomers that have purchased a cottage or [an investment] property," said Sophie Creelman, a junior designer with Haliburton-based ACM Designs. "I've only worked in interior design for a few years, but some of my colleagues who have decades' worth of experience have said they've never seen it this busy."

The term 'interior designer' is almost redundant now, with most operations serving the Highlands going beyond simply offering advice on colour schemes, lighting placement and appliances.

"We're project managers, so really we oversee all aspects of a build or a redesign," Creelman said. "We'll sit down with homeowners and go over every aspect of a job, tapping into what they'd want in their ideal dream property. Then we'll work directly with our local contractors to bring that vision to life."

Creelman has extensive experience working on kitchen redesigns, but said bathrooms are her specialty.

She recently oversaw a project that allowed her to tap into her creative nature and fashion a finish that delighted her and her client.

"I love using designs that are a little different than what you would typically see in a magazine," Creelman said. "I like to use designs that are thoughtful and have a little bit of a story. On this project, we used a plasterer to get a unique finish and installed fixtures inspired by work from [famous American architect] Frank Lloyd Wright."



It's this attention to detail and ability to call upon a wealth of contacts, both inside and beyond the County's borders, where designers like Creelman earn their keep.

"I would say the one benefit of hiring an interior designer to help with a project is the peace of mind you get. We really do manage the whole process from start to finish, and do everything we can to make sure our clients love their new space," Creelman said. "Because we're experienced and deal with issues on a day-to-day basis, we're there whenever a problem arises and often have creative ways to overcome them.

"Right now, supply chain issues are still quite prevalent. But because we know that, we'll make sure that things such as appliances, windows and flooring are all ordered way in advance, because we know it could take a year for them to come in... We've really worked to create a system where unavailability and a temperamental, unpredictable market can be offset by solid planning and preparation," she added.

Kitchens best bang for the buck finished space to look.

Lauren Poetker, a designer with Cedar Winds, said she's seeing a similar thing. Poetker said she's quoting at least a year for new projects due to uncertainty over the availability of materials and contractors.

Cedar Winds is a bit of a different operation in that they strictly manage new build and complete redesigns. Poetker said she typically manages between 10 and 12 projects per year.

"My job is really fun because I get to help people throughout the entire process,

beginning with the opening conversation discussing what they'd like to see and ending with a big, happy smile once the work is finished," Poetker said.

Breaking down projects into different phases helps to keep things moving, and ensures clients are aware of where things are at all times. Poetker said she begins with a layout analysis and finding out how clients utilize their space. "I find out what their routine is like, how often they host people – that's a big thing for people up here, people with cottages like to host – and then we come up with a design that not only appeals, but is practical for what they want," she said.

Once that's out of the way, Poetker moves into what she calls the building design phase. This is where electrical and plumbing decisions are made, so clients have to know, roughly, where they'd like appliances to be located and how they'd like their main living space to be set up. From there, it's the finishing phase: think cabinetry, flooring, tiling, colours. This is where the most time is spent, as clients decide how they want their

"Then the last piece of the puzzle is the communication from what we've talked about and what's in my head and making sure that can be communicated properly to the guys in the field. We'll have specifications, full drawing packages, everything ready to go," Poetker said. "One of the benefits of working with us is that everything is handled and done in-house. Even the most complicated projects are that much easier, because everyone is on the same page."

In terms of prioritizing projects, Poetker

said the kitchen is often the place where homeowners get the best bang for their buck.

"It's one of those spaces that you spend a lot of time in. Not only do you want it to look good, but you need it to function well, because it gets used a lot," she said. "That's also one of the big spaces that immediately adds a lot of value to your house. So, if you're looking to resell, the kitchen is probably the best place for you to invest."

Both Creelman and Poetker had some tips for projects homeowners could lead on their own that wouldn't necessarily break the bank but could change the feel of a property, and perhaps even increase its value.

"A fresh coat of paint will go a long way. White backdrops are really appealing right now, and trying to spruce up a living room with throw pillows and small things like that can make a huge difference," Creelman said.

Poetker echoed that sentiment, saying that creative property owners could go one step further by playing around with wall textures. This could involve adding shiplap or some form of paneling to "add a little coziness to the space".

Doing a little work outside of the house is an easy-to-do project, too.

"Increasing curb appeal is a huge one. If you like to putter in the great outdoors, work on some gardening and some landscaping, I think that goes a long way. Whether it's friends and family, or potential buyers showing up at the house, when you've got this beautiful, fresh exterior I find it just screams 'welcome home'," Poetker said.



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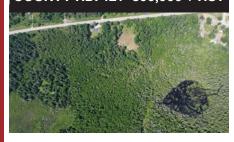
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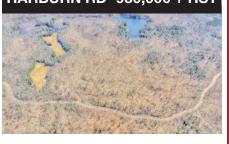
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