

## Cover Story

## Michigan's cottage chic

Tips on creating your own 'happy place,' wherever up north is for you

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Special to The Detroit News

Michiganians are blessed with more freshwater coastline – more than 3,288 miles – than any other state. Add deep forests, sandy beaches and breathtaking scenic attractions, and it's not surprising that we are also one of the top states in the number of cottages and second homes. According to the National Association of Home Builders, half of the nation's second homes are concentrated in just eight states and Michigan is the only Midwestern one on the list.

From simple one-room cabins in the U.P. and the Thumb to waterfront manors up and down Lake Michigan, the one thing second homes have in common, regardless of style or age, is that all serve as an escape from the world, a place to relax and de-stress, says Kelly Konoske, president of Harbor Springs-based Cottage Company Interiors. "A successful cottage is one where friends and family can gather and enjoy each other's company. It's where memories are made and shared... overall, it's a 'happy place.'"

As Memorial Day and the official cottage season kickoff approaches, we offer the following tribute to and tips for creating or upgrading your own "happy place."

## The Great Outdoors

Lissa Edwards, managing editor of Traverse magazine, has covered the industry for three decades and toured more than 800 cottages during her tenure. "They come in all shapes, forms and sizes," she says. Not surprisingly, many are about maximizing their rural location. "Cottages are about the view and access to the outside," she says. "Windows, windows, windows. Doors that open wide. Fabulous transitional outdoor rooms. Those are the things that make people fall in love with their cottage."

The biggest change she has seen in her tenure has been "the move away from anything fussy," she says. "Nowadays up north, children and pets should be seen and heard. Families are so busy now and a cottage is their chance to reconnect. Families now want everyone relaxing together, they don't want to create a place where sandy feet and wet bathing suits are forbidden."

## If You Build It They Will Come

That philosophy has influenced the architecture as well. "Clients come to us



Todd Zawistowski

Authentic Northern Michigan summer architecture by Ken Richmond of Richmond Architects includes wrap-around porches, rolling lawn to the water and an easy casual floor plan.

wanting a more playful, memorable place to spend time with their family," says Traverse City-based architect Ken Richmond. And that's true if it's a new build or a renovation. "The design has to accommodate bare feet, wet bathing suits and dogs on the furniture," he explains. "People want a place that is grounded in tradition, with local elements, and one that is centered around the outdoors even if it's an in-town cottage."

That's true even in more contemporary spaces, which account for about 30 percent of the firm's work load. Regardless of style, "there's a lot of stone and wood, definitely a move to bringing outside materials in," Richmond explained. Even vintage-influenced projects want contemporary conveniences – air-conditioning, energy efficiency, home offices, and often "at least a nod to green or greenish construction," he says.

The definition of a cottage or second home is expanding. "I see more diversity in building types," he says. "There's more interest in a little house in town perhaps or even something like a compound of

little guest houses. Younger clients are more sophisticated and more open to new ideas. They're looking for authenticity. They don't necessarily want to rough it but they want to be connected to the outdoors."

That's true further downstate as well, says Grand Rapids-based architect Wayne Visbeen. "Cottage means different things to different people. Some people's cottage lakefront home is significantly larger than their primary residence. Others think of tiny, classic dwellings with clapboard and no air-conditioning. There's also been a significant uptick in contemporary and transitional design."

On everyone's wish list are outdoor living and dining and interiors with lots of amenities and a highly efficient use of space. Also requested are outdoor showers and changing areas, built-ins, smart storage, fireplaces and fire pits, and phantom screens that allow a covered porch to become a screened room with weather changes. "People are putting their money into common spaces and outdoor living," Visbeen says.

## A Light Touch

Konoske says cottage interiors reflect the change in the architecture around them. "We've moved away from frilly window coverings or ornate moldings and furniture pieces. There's cleaner lines in furniture, fabrics and finishes. There's been a shift from less formal and rustic to more casual and comfortable. Fabrics are lighter and brighter, furniture is more durable and finishes are more forgiving," she explains.

She recommends "flexible furniture layouts and versatile pieces that wed functionality to beauty and comfort. There is also open, multipurpose spaces for family and private spaces for individuals. A successful cottage is low maintenance. I like forgiving fabrics, durable materials like quartz and flexible furniture because who really wants to spend any more time cleaning or worrying. Low maintenance materials and finishes are more conducive to the lifestyle we really want to live," says the designer, who recently introduced her own line of easygoing furniture called Cottage by Kelly.





Old Hickory Furniture Company

A rustic dining set from Old Hickory, available through Fenton Home Furnishings, complements the architectural style of this lodge-like structure.



Dietrich Floeter Photography

The classic sun porch on this Northern Michigan cottage by Ken Richmond of Richmond Architects was winterized to expand interior space out toward the lake.

## Classic Cottage

Maria Schumacher of Fenton Home Furnishings agreed that cottage owners want relaxed and easy-care interiors but says not all have embraced a lighter palette. There's still a market for rustic log furniture and other lodge-like decor, a style that remains one of their best sellers. "The lodge theme has always been pop-

ular," she said. "You might not want bears or elk in your city home, but why not in your cottage? If you want to have a canoe fixture, then go for it."

And while there are plenty of traditional cabin and lodge-look devotees, she's seen a definite trend toward embracing individuality. "People are doing anything and everything when it comes to their second homes," she explains, adding that



Todd Zawistowski

This big lodge main room by Ken Richmond of Traverse City's Richmond Architects features a walk-in fireplace, local stone and lots of period furniture.



Harbor Springs Cottage Company

A nautical theme gives personality to this bedroom renovated by Harbor Springs Cottage Company.

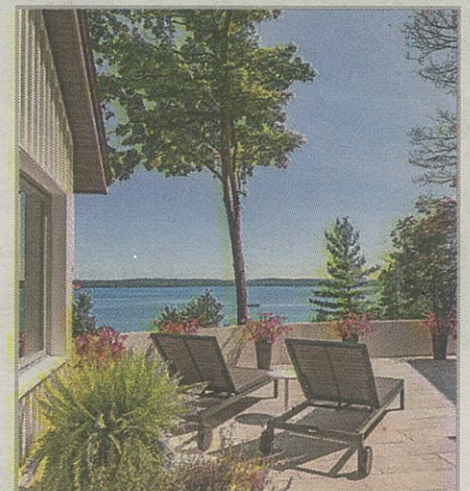
**More online:** To see a photo gallery on cottage design, go to [detroitnews.com/homestyle](http://detroitnews.com/homestyle).



the majority of their clients have property on the east side of the state, including Alpena, Caseville and the Thumb. "I like to encourage people to add a bit more whimsy or color," she says. "The pressure's off... this is where you go to have fun and that should be true of your decorating, too."

Konoske concurs, adding that relaxed "cottage style" has even spilled over into some people's main residences. That's not surprising, given all that a cottage represents, she says.

"Comfortable, accommodating and involving minimal effort, it evokes feeling and connection to nature, to family and a desire to not just live life, but to find joy in a life well-lived," she says. "Cottage style is more than just a design, it's a state of mind."



Todd Zawistowski Photography

A modern stone terrace perched high above the bluest lake in the North is part of a home designed by Traverse City's Ken Richmond of Richmond Architects.