

# DESIGNER: STEPHANIE BALDWIN

By Jennifer Carson

Photo by Tatum McWatters

“I love all the seasonal activities available to us, the natural beauty of our area as well as the supportive attitude so many of the businesses and people have,” Baldwin said. “It is a wonderful place to live.”

Stephanie Baldwin founded Edgewater Design Group in Petoskey in 2011. Born and raised in Northern Michigan, Baldwin actively volunteers in the community, operates her business and is a wife and mother. Baldwin considers herself blessed to operate her own business in the same community in which she was raised.

Volunteerism and being a team-player is important to Baldwin. Just look to some of her memberships:

- Northern Lakes Economic Alliance Board of Directors, trustee
- Home Builders Association of Northern Michigan, board vice president
- Petoskey Sunrise Rotary, board president 2015-16
- Petoskey Chamber of Commerce member

Placing a strong emphasis on a collaborative culture, Baldwin has cultivated a business model that works well for her, her team and her clients. Each person has a role in her business. Employing an architect, structural engineer, designers and drafters, and an office manager, Baldwin is confident in her team's ability to provide comprehensive service to her clients.





“We are a very creative team that provides excellent service at a great value from start to finish,” Baldwin said. “The team has years of experience individually as well as working together. Our clients get the benefit of a team approach in providing options to consider when creating their residential or commercial project.”

Formally educated in architecture, Baldwin is a designer first and foremost. She has a cooperative perspective, putting a strong emphasis on the client’s wants and needs. Touting the benefits of the Houzz website, Baldwin helps guide the relationship along in clearly identifying her client’s design ideas. Using this perspective, she can provide cost savings with electronic communications and ease of understanding through visual mediums.

As the building industry changes, Baldwin and her teammates are adaptable. Knowing that, Baldwin says, “Codes and regulations have become much more stringent over the years. These are requirements we must design and engineer to. It does equate to more time on projects for us and more costs in materials/labor for our clients. Clients also provide more thorough input of what they want thanks to the research they do on the internet as well as inspirational photos they find on websites like Houzz. This is very helpful during the creative process.”

## Stephanie Baldwin’s top 10 design tips:

### 1. Understand your property’s specifics

A site survey will show you all zoning setbacks, establish the building envelope, show topography and all utilities.

### 2. Soil testing

Proper soil testing will determine the type of foundation system you need for your lot. Knowing this ahead of time, ensures your budget is accurate.

### 3. Be honest about your budget

This allows the design to reflect your specific wants and needs without getting out of control or underwhelming.

### 4. Design is a team approach

Choosing a design team to work with is all about relationships. Set up an appointment to meet face-to-face to ensure the right personality fit.

### 5. Single point of responsibility

Single point of responsibility is also important in deciding on a design team. Design teams that cover all facets of the process create efficiencies for you and your general contractor.

### 6. Visualization tools

Visualization tools are important for a design team to have. 3D tools help you visualize exactly what you are getting prior to construction.

### 7. Awareness of special requirements

Understand your special requirements with room sizes that work for your needs. Measuring your current spaces helps you to determine what is working and what isn’t.

### 8. Photo examples

Gather pictures of exterior and interior styles you like. This helps the designer get inside your head. Websites like Houzz allow you to gather them in one spot.

### 9. Patience and honesty

Design is a process, so be prepared to be patient and be honest with what you like and don’t like. Both are important to the designer to create the space that works best for you.

### 10. Time management

To stay on track with a design and build timeline, be ready to make decisions accordingly. Design works with a team approach. Everyone needs to do their part per the established timeline.

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