



Key Points:

- With sustainable sourcing now a core theme of residential interior design, seeking out local and bespoke suppliers is a good first step.
- Biophilic design is an approach to architecture and interior design that aims to connect homeowners more closely to nature.



Dayna Tooman is a designer with Studio Z Architecture, an award-winning, nationally-recognized residential architecture firm based in Plymouth, Michigan.

Published: September 2022
Previously published in:
CAM Magazine

AIA Michigan
www.aiami.com

A More Natural Approach to Residential Design Trends

Dayna Tooman, Designer; Studio Z Architecture

While minimalism and sleek design trends are unlikely to fade completely, current trends suggest a more natural approach to design features. Across flooring, tiles, and built-in design, we find ourselves and our clients attracted to more natural wood and sustainably-sourced materials.

At Studio Z, we believe that this trend towards natural materials is here to stay. With everyone spending more time at home over the past two years—often working from home, a continuing shift towards a more environmentally-conscious mindset, and the rising costs of building materials, we’re seeing a more natural approach to interior design.



But what does this shift to natural materials mean for existing modern aesthetics? Are we headed back to the days of the orange oak and pine paneling cabin-in-the-woods look, or is the new ‘natural approach’ adopting a more contemporary and quality-focused vibe?

Flooring

When it comes to flooring, there’s a growing love for natural materials, such as bamboo and reclaimed hardwood flooring. We’re also finding that many renovation projects include restoring hardwood flooring currently hidden beneath carpets to its former glory.

At Studio Z, we absolutely love it when clients come to us after buying an older house. They’re just as excited as we are about what can be repurposed and given a second chance at life.

For the past decade, it seems many homeowners went all-in on clean, almost clinical plain ceramic or vinyl flooring because it’s easy to clean. And while luxury vinyl tile (LVT) isn’t likely to go out of use anytime soon, we are happy to see a variety of warmer and more aesthetically-pleasing flooring options.

In particular, natural wood is making a comeback, with biophilic design undoubtedly having a heavy influence. Biophilic design is an approach to architecture and interior design that aims to connect homeowners more closely to nature. With a biophilic design approach, a home can become a healthier environment, with



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design features that include better ventilation, lighting, and more natural design elements.

When it comes to more natural flooring materials, both warm and neutral tones can work exceptionally well. In smaller spaces that would feel closed in with darker floors, we have a particular appreciation for light, neutral and modern tones (those Scandinavian design elements aren't going away!).

When faced with a 1990s-era bathroom in need of serious updating, our team at Studio Z decided to balance natural materials with a modern aesthetic. We added a slip-resistant pebble shower floor to make a statement in keeping with the natural sensibility. Overall, the design was a huge success, with the right level of design and functionality to tie in with the rest of the home.

When formulating a design such as this one, it's important to remember that as designers, we need to envisage what the client wants. At the same time, we need to use our expertise to implement what we know works and what will prove to last over the years, both in design and performance. In this case, even if our client decides to change other elements of their bathroom design in the future, we're confident that the natural shower floor will stay.

Tile

Tile is always an interesting subject for interior designers, architects, and homeowners alike. The possibilities are endless, and yet choosing the perfect tile for a home can feel like one of the most challenging tasks when it comes to designing a home.

Few design experts will ever start their design journey with a specific tile. Instead, the right tile usually shows up after extensive research. With sustainable sourcing now a core theme of residential interior design, seeking out local and bespoke suppliers is a good first step.

Our Ann Arbor Craftsman Home Renovation project started with an awkward 1980s F-shaped kitchen that needed complete reworking. Once we had reconfigured the shape and style of the kitchen, we used locally-sourced artisan tiles with an emphasis on natural tones to create a better sense of cohesion between the kitchen and the garden space it overlooks.

When a room has direct access to an outdoor space, it's critical to incorporate—even design around—this connection between interior and nature. With the trend towards a more natural way of viewing interior design and home build projects, architects and contractors are looking for solutions to more seamlessly relate