

# Home by Design

**The latest trends and mainstays in interior design revealed.**

By Darcy Lehner

Perhaps Dorothy summed it up best in her classic Oz line, "There's no place like home, there's no place like home." More than just a magical movie moment, that statement reflects the sentiment most people have. And a big part of the aura of a home is the style and furnishings within, often crafted by modern day magicians — interior designers or decorators.

These specialists are more than just harried figures laden with sample books. They are analytical problem-solvers who focus on your needs and interests. Designers act as consultants who help examine options to make home a very special place by dealing with clients' aspirations, needs and budget.

Generally speaking, interior designers deal with all aspects of interior decorating plus some details of a building plan, things like window placements or ceiling heights or room sizes. Generally, interior decorators only plan and coordinate color schemes, paint finishes, furnishings, cabinet styles and light fixtures. For purposes



**Warm colors, comfy chaise lounge seating and plentiful windows create a relaxing atmosphere.**

Photo courtesy Grand Design Group

of discussion, both are decorators and there are advantages to using either, regardless what they're called.

They can help decorate an entire home or only parts of it. There's probably no better place to use professional help than the center of home life — the family room.

Whether it is called a great room — typical in a home with no living room — or a family room, the space is a magnet and often is the dominant focal point for family as well as guests, second only, perhaps, to the kitchen.

Pam Yost of Grand Design Group, evaluates the personal

lifestyle of the family before digging into design specifics. "We get a feel for the family and then begin with a wish list and a list of questions. We ask about the function of the room and who the primary users are as a first step."

Family rooms may be "getaway" spaces to catch a movie or to get reacquainted with a favorite book. More often in newer homes, these spacious rooms allow family members to pursue separate activities simultaneously or accommodate large social gatherings.

Toni Gundling, design consultant for C.V. Perry Builders, finds customer preferences in family room design moving from the traditional look and typical uses. "Our clients are leaning toward a slightly more contemporary look, featuring lighter colors and cleaner, simpler lines," Gundling says. "Many of our home buyers are interested in achieving a 'Pottery Barn' effect."



**An inviting family room from C.V. Perry Builders.**

Photo courtesy C.V. Perry Builders



They like combining leathers, hardwoods and wrought iron in the same living space if the mix is right. They tend to be more adventurous and are not afraid of an eclectic look."

A family room is a popular place to take design and decorating chances. "The keys to enjoying the family room are simple," says Gundling. "If it is a comfortable inviting space with tasteful colors, the rest is just a matter of accessorizing to the family's changing preferences."

Yost cites an entertainment center as a likely component that needs careful consideration in new home planning. "Proper planning is more important than ever when including media centers as part of the room design. Making allowances for extensive media later on in the building process can be time consuming and expensive for the owner," says Yost. "Many homeowners have a component list they review with the electronics firm they are using. That detailed information proves vital in planning things well."

Today's great room may be designed to handle the demands of a home theater, communication cables, computers, CD players, and multiple telephone lines. Although such installations are traditionally outside their training, more and more interior designers are helping plan them. Anticipating the types of electronic equipment that will be used assures sufficient circuits are installed, wiring is hidden and electrical outlets and phone jacks are logically located. Then, other aspects of decorating can be coordinated with the center or equipment and the furniture that houses it.

Technology aside, comfort remains key in family room design. To make the lounging experience extra comfy, softer textiles with inviting textures are in demand. Durable, yet soft coverings, like leather, remain strong favorites for furniture. Yost sees increased preference for functional and comfortable pieces that can serve dual purposes. Cocktail ottomans are a practical and pretty solution for users who need to serve appetizers on Saturday night and put their feet up on Sunday. Yost notes an increased interest in larger windows and more ornate window detailing. "Buyers can't seem to get enough windows as part of their home design," she says. "A dramatic wall of windows allows for the natural outdoor beauty to become part of the interior decorating."

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A mixture of rich patterns and colors compliment this family room. Below, cabinetry provides maximum storage while concealing kitchen appliances.

Photos courtesy Terry Slee Interiors



Still, the gathering place in most homes is the kitchen and its design is the priority for the majority of homeowners. Most people prefer kitchens they can really live in. They want larger, inviting spaces where people stay and talk, enjoy a meal or concentrate on their homework.

Designers consider total use of the kitchen. Are you a gourmet cook who re-

quires professional appliances or a mother who would appreciate more storage space? Is there enough work space between the sink and the stove? What about seating space? A table or an island?

Terri Slee of Terri Slee Interiors, says, "I urge my clients to spend (extra) money on items they aren't likely to change." She believes the kitchen is a great example of a room that needs to have efficiency, color, and personality. "Design is critical. Many kitchen components such as counters and cabinetry are big-ticket items. We want our customers to have all the latest cabinet innovations available, as they may not be replacing them for the duration of their ownership. We want those elements to stand the test of time."

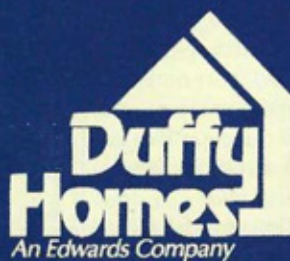
Designers help sort through the vast selection of cabinetry. Height, material and finishes have changed. From rich wood to a worn paint effect, cabinets add distinction. Glass inserts are an option. User friendly storage options are endless. Appliances can now hide behind cabinet-

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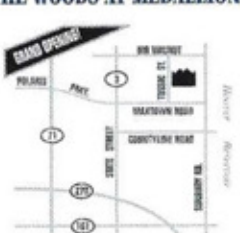


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## Home designers' short list

### Advice from Terri Slee, Terri Slee Interiors

- Create a floor plan including scale and color scheme before beginning any design or decorating project. Note building features you like and dislike, traffic flow and where furniture will be placed. Decide if what you own can be used and what you will need to buy.
- When blending households, inventory what each party owns. The melding of families and possessions can offer decorating opportunities and challenges.

### Advice from Toni Gundling, Design Consultant, C.V. Perry Builders

- Be realistic when researching products and considering the "do-it-yourself" option. While trying to cut costs, you may end up spending more money. Installation, labor and warranties are all critical considerations in buying from your builder.
- When selecting products and reviewing home decorating options, be sure to consider which elements are easy to change and which are more permanent. It is easy to accessorize your home according to your current taste. Changing permanent items such as flooring, cabinetry or trim is another matter.

### Advice from Pam Yost, Grand Design Group

- Have a complete plan for your project—large or small. A plan keeps you on track, prevents impulse buying, and helps you remember budget priorities. With myriad products on the market, a plan is essential to focus on purchases that make sense.
- There is no substitute for good lighting. Never skimp on wiring. Even if you can't afford the fixtures right now, put in the wiring for future installation.

### Consensus

- When building, a full rather than a partial basement is a sound investment. The space will come in handy for your family and is a plus for resale as well.



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matching fronts rather than taking center stage.

"Individual tastes change at least every six to nine years," says Slee. "Homeowners need to get out of the mindset that they are decorating for life. Compare the process to buying a car. What appealed to you 10 years ago may not now. I don't encourage change just for the sake of changing. But it's refreshing to experiment with new colors or textures once in awhile."

Most designers would agree that slow, prudent home decorating purchases are a plus when moving to a new home. Before splurging on major items, decorators help buyers inventory their current belongings to see what can be attractively blended into the new home. They're experts at combining various types and characteristics of furnishings and accessories when creating interiors, so their professional advice can save money and frustration. ♦

*Darcy Lehner, a Gahanna resident, is a freelance writer.*

## How to work with your decorator

A designer or decorator can save you months of shopping and prevent some potentially messy missteps. Their role can range from simply listening to your ideas to directing you to the best products to scheduling and supervising installation.

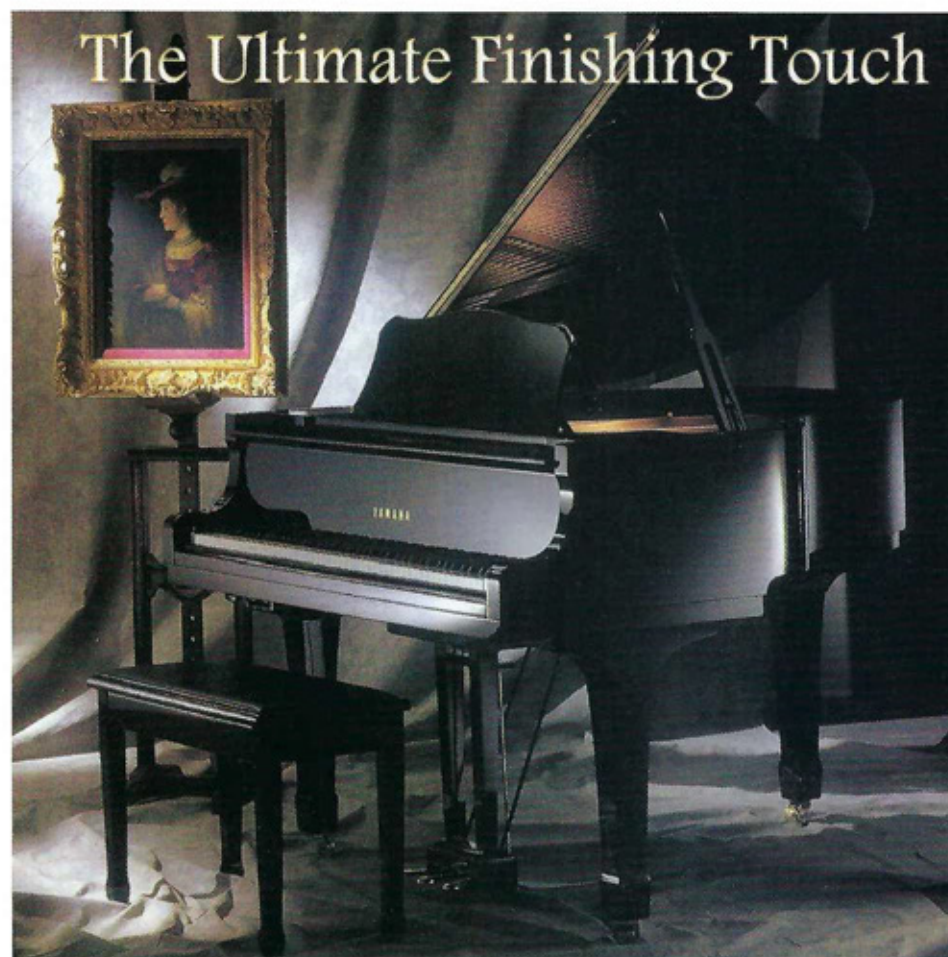
Things work out best when you bring in a decorating planner at the beginning. That's when their input – how much wall space a window treatment needs or preferred cabinet height for those extra tall ceilings – is essential. Otherwise, decisions after the fact – adding or removing a window, changing the distance between doors and windows, adding recessed lights where there's no wiring – can be overly expensive.

To keep communications open, meet early and often. Have the decorator and

contractor or architect draw clear lines of responsibility. Address specifics on who chooses and buys which products and who arranges delivery. For instance, will the decorator order the carpet and floor covering and oversee installation or simply communicate your choices to the contractor? Will the decorator or contractor arrange for custom molding samples?

While you are occupied with other life issues, the decorator can be your on-site eyes, ears and sometimes mouth when belated decorating decisions can affect construction.

If, for example, you finally settle on oversized tile flooring but the contractor planned for hardwood floors, the thickness – and cost – of the subfloor may change. Or, fixture selection may have been slow and



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