

THE VALUE OF INTERIOR DESIGN

Whether you plan to use a contractor or complete a remodel yourself, there are benefits to hiring a professional interior designer.

So, what does an interior designer do exactly, and how can they help?

Let's start by clarifying some terminology. Interior *designers* and interior *decorators* are not necessarily one in the same. Interior designers have the specific training required to plan the restructure of a space. Designers also work side-by-side with homeowners, architects and contractors throughout the entire remodeling process. They can do everything from suggest wall demolition to finish selections, and all things in between. Decorators, on the other hand, are not involved in designing the layout of the space. Rather, they typically come in at the end of a project to help homeowners select furnishings, accent lighting and fabrics.

Good interior designers are great listeners and adept at helping you define your style. They have construction knowledge, which allows them to quickly determine if your ideas are realistic given your budget, timeline and intended use for the space. They work with you from the beginning to the end of your remodel to ensure the finished project meets your lifestyle needs and reflects your individual taste.

Once you share project goals with an interior designer, your level of design participation is entirely up to you. Interior designers will work with you and/or your construction team to assess the structural and mechanical feasibility of your ideas and make recommendations. They can help you create a focal point for your space – such as an architectural element, fireplace, window, piece of artwork or furniture – and then design the plan around that inspiration. They typically begin by creating an “as-built” plan for your existing space, and then develop new floor plans, elevation drawings and 3-D renderings to visualize your project and guide the scope of work.

Once you approve the final layout, interior designers can walk you through the process of selecting and purchasing finishes, lighting and materials to achieve a cohesive, functional and pleasing space. Your interior designer is responsible for ordering, shipping and tracking all products and materials for your project and orchestrating carefully timed deliveries to keep the production schedule on track. They also make sure all materials are installed according to plan. And most importantly, a good designer will keep an eagle eye on your project budget, which is invaluable.

If you're working with a remodeling company, it's wise to choose a builder with at least one interior designer on staff who is certified with the American Society of Interior Designers (ASID), the International Interior Design Association (IIDA), or both. It's even better if the designer works as part of a collaborative design-build team. If you're doing the remodel yourself, then search for a designer with experience and credentials, and involve them as early as possible in your planning process.

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