



Building Your Dream Home? Know When to Engage Your Interior Designer

By Amy Fischer | Image provided by Spectrum Interior Design

Custom designing a home is a dream for a lot of us, but if it's all new to you, what do you need to do to pull it all together? With all the steps, sequencing, and timing, it can feel overwhelming. Your design/build experience, including the end-result, is largely dependent on how you approach the overall process and who you have on your team.

First things first, you need a site and a good realtor to help you find it. Here in the Silicon Valley, much of the area is already developed so vacant land is hard to come by. If you want to build in this area, it's likely that you will be looking at parcels where the existing home will need to be demolished. Many cities have building restrictions on the size and height of new builds, so it is important to know any constraints by jurisdiction.

Once you have your location, next you need the right design/build team. Establishing this from the beginning makes all the difference. Your team may include an architect, to design your home and draft the blueprints, an interior designer, to create your home environment, a landscape designer for your outdoor living, and of course, the general contractor to assemble all the designs.

Your architect may be first to the team, bringing practical and technical expertise to the land and home development. Along with studying site conditions, sun orientations, designing the floor plan and exterior elevations, the architect is drawing the details of how to build your new home.

Before submitting your blueprints for city approval however, it is wise to consider engaging your interior designer. While some may think interior design encompasses only furnishings and home décor and could defer later in the schedule, full-service interior designers with architectural and new construction background are a valuable asset at this early (and critical) design development phase. The creative collaboration that results from the unique and varying perspectives of the architect and interior designer efficiently streamlines your overall design process.

Your interior designer will study your lifestyle, expose you to new ideas and provide solutions of ways you might live even better. While the roles share similarities, the designer's exploration is more intimate than an architect in that it includes deeper studies into how you cook, clean, entertain, relax and organize.

So how does the full-service interior designer apply this lifestyle insight to your blueprint design development? Well, in evaluating your cooking and entertaining regimens, your designer may recognize the need to reconfigure your appliance layouts or expand your cabinetry storage. They may propose relocating doors, windows or fireplaces to accommodate improved furniture layouts. Your designer may suggest revisions to your window sizes and operational mechanics in anticipation of accommodating the decorative window treatments you will later need. Making these minor refinements in the drawing phase is simple and easy, plus it alleviates regret and costly revisions during construction.

Landscape design seamlessly integrates into the big picture early as well. Your interior designer will ensure that your exterior is an extension of your interior by conveying important color palettes and material preferences. Your architect and builder will want confirmed paving material decisions early to help with indoor/outdoor flooring transitions.

Early integration of interior design in the architectural and landscape design phases ultimately saves you hassle and money. Your overall design schedule is reduced when the blueprint set submitted for city approval is comprehensive. Your construction schedule is maintained because the plans do not need revisiting in the field. Unforeseen builder change orders are bypassed when you don't need to reframe walls, change or omit windows, or reposition gas and electrical.

Having your design team established early and your interior designer advocating your overall vision from the beginning expedites the process and provides you peace of mind knowing all details are included. Designing and building your dream home should be a fun and memorable experience, and it all begins with understanding the value of early team formation.

To learn more or be further inspired, visit: www.SpectrumInteriorDesign.com

Amy Fischer is the founder and principal interior designer of Spectrum Interior Design, the leading Silicon Valley firm specializing in full-service luxury design for newly constructed homes and speculative estates.

