

Designing to Sell Designing to Stay



by Adrienne Zvacek, BID Provisional IDAS

When it comes to designing and renovating your house there are two different approaches. Ask yourself one important question: Am I designing to sell, or am I designing to stay? Consider how long you plan on living in your house. If you will be living in your home for a short term (zero to five years) you should design to sell. If you are going to live in the home long term (five years plus) you need to design to stay.

Designing to sell can be complex. There are a lot of different things to consider. The major point to contend with will always be the budget. You want to be able to spend your money in the most reasonable way to get the biggest return. If you have a limited budget, the first place to spend your money is in the kitchen, the second place is in the bathrooms. If your budget is not limited, spend your money on things the buyer will notice such as curb appeal, a renovated kitchen with new appliances, upgraded bathrooms, finished basement, new windows and shingles, and new energy efficient heating and cooling systems.

Curb appeal consists of a couple of different things, both landscaping and the exterior condition of the house. The landscaping should be easy to maintain with a mixture of plants. You should also consider the condition of the driveway; does it need replacing or repairing? You don't want overgrown foliage cascading over sideways, covering windows, blocking the view of the house. The exterior condition of the house is crucial. If buyers see that the house needs painting, new fascia and eaves, or any other major work, they will be turned off. The exterior should give the buyer a feeling that the house is in new condition.

The 'new condition feeling' should continue once the buyer comes into the house. Having a renovated kitchen in an open floor plan will add value to the home. Large open spaces enhance the feeling of ample square footage and buyers will be willing to spend more money. Kitchen layout is critical and if done properly, will be another selling feature. New matching appliances will also add value to the kitchen. Countertops that are

of natural material will catch the buyer's attention. If buyers see that all the hard work has been completed and that all they have to do is move in, they will be inclined to spend more money.

The buyer's attention will also be captured if the bathrooms are upgraded. Unique fixtures that have a cohesive feeling will give the bathroom a custom feel. Flooring and custom tiled showers and baths can make the buyer feel as though they were thought of during the design phase. It adds a personal touch.

Custom design can also be carried through to the basement design and layout. Consider the demographics of the area the house is in. If you are unsure consult your realtor and they will be able to give you additional information. Will someone with kids or grandkids be buying the house? Perhaps additional bedrooms are needed in the basement. Will the buyers be a couple with no kids who would like a theater and bar in the basement? Consider those possibilities and get the best value for your work!

New windows and shingles are big expense items that could make the sale of the house. Energy efficient heating and cooling systems are also important. These upgrades should be considered once the visual improvements are completed.

Designing to stay brings up some of the same considerations such as budget and where to start. When designing to stay there are other factors to consider such as your likes and dislikes, style, stage of life, and disabilities. Other factors to consider include the level of maintenance you want in your home and potential upgrades. With all of these factors, custom designs are more likely when designing to stay.

When it comes to personal likes and dislikes you typically don't have a problem determining them. For example, do you like to bath or shower on a day to day basis? Do you like an island or do you prefer a peninsula in the kitchen. Explore your likes and dislikes to determine how they will affect your renovation.

Style is uniquely your own. Do you prefer traditional, contemporary or somewhere in the middle? Once you have determined your style

make that your guide for the entire renovation. It will determine kitchen cabinets, bathroom fixtures, flooring, and window styles, to name a few.

Your stage of life will make an impact on your decision to renovate. Is this your first home? Is entertaining friends your passion? Or, do you have teenagers who need their own space? No matter what the stage of life is, you need to plan ahead. Once you have children you may want a main floor laundry. Do you plan on traveling a lot? A low maintenance home may be in order. Assess your stage of life and look into the future before making major renovation decisions.

If you or someone you live with has a disability, consider what's best for the health, welfare, and safety of everyone. A two story home is not a good idea for someone with mobility issues. Ramps, lifts, grab bars, poles, and low resistance flooring are all things that will have to be installed. Your home will have to be custom designed to meet everyone's needs.

Maintenance is a key consideration when selecting any new material or product. If you are doing exterior

renovations you probably don't want to repaint the siding regularly so think about installing vinyl siding or stucco. In the kitchen you may not want to reseal your granite, so a different product like quartz may be more your style.

The decision to upgrade is a little easier if you know you are designing to stay. You may choose to upgrade from a standard tub to a luxurious jetted tub because you enjoy relaxing in the evenings. Maybe you would like slate in the kitchen rather than vinyl with a slate pattern.

The main differences between designing to sell and designing to stay are time frame, budget, personal tastes, and custom design. The time frame for designing to sell usually requires a much faster turn around. The budget for designing to stay can be added to as time goes by. Personal tastes influence designing to stay a lot more since you know who will be living in the house. Custom design can be done in both cases; it is just the amount that will vary. So the question is: Are you designing to sell, or designing to stay?

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Ask yourself one important question:

**Am I designing to sell,
or am I designing to stay?**

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