

Why Hire an Interior Designer?

By Lisa Koutsky Sten, CID, CGBP
Photos courtesy of emeraldlight.com

Congratulations on moving to the Bay Area. Our region enjoys an exceptional climate, varied cultural events and remarkable people to boot. We hope you can complete your move quickly and feel “things are in order” so you can take advantage of the many exciting local opportunities available here.

To get settled in your home promptly and efficiently, you may want to consider working with an interior designer. In addition to helping you shape your home to meet your needs, an interior designer can actually save you time and money. A Certified Interior Designer (CID) has a broad base of knowledge ranging from big-picture space planning and efficient design, to remodeling and maintenance, and of course to the hardware and soft goods such as window treatments, furniture, and yes, also pillows. Technical knowledge, code familiarity and a solid background in design theory are important components of an interior designer’s education and expertise. Identifying a professional through the CCIDC (California Council for Interior Design Certification) will lead you to a CID who is already pre-qualified and certified by a third party. An interior designer can also save you a great deal of time and effort by doing the legwork for you. Here are some basic factors to consider when working with an interior designer.

Finding and Hiring an Interior Designer

In addition to a search of the CCIDC website, gather local magazines and pull photos of projects that appeal to you. Look at websites of these designers and consider interviewing a firm or two. Questions to

consider include inquiring about the workload of the designer you have in mind—will your project be given priority? Does the designer live in your area? An interior designer should be able to ask questions and generate ideas that draw out your individual personality and specific living preferences.

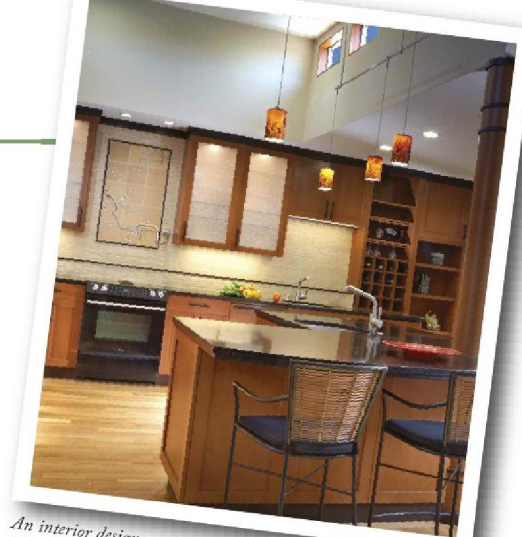
Interior designers have local connections and access to design showrooms, and are familiar with the best sources for furniture, lighting and accessories. They can also help you find a good painter, handyman or remodeling contractor.

Be sure to clarify how your interior designer will bill for their time; depending on the project, some designers work on a fixed-fee basis while others will charge a fee for their time plus a mark-up on goods they can buy at a designer’s discount. Establish your budget with your designer before you sign a contract or begin on a project.

Note that many interior designers will specialize in certain areas of design which could include kitchen and bath design, lighting design or closet and garage organization.

Before you move

An interior designer can catalog your favorite pieces of furniture (take dimensions and photographs) and provide floor plan scenarios showing the layout of furniture in your new home. If you have an awkward “traffic flow” through the rooms, or if your home lacks a strong connection to a beautiful backyard entertainment area, an interior designer can create floor plans to restructure your floor plan and refer you to local builders to construct the new plan.



An interior designer can make a kitchen go from plain to pizzazz. This open-plan kitchen has a contemporary Asian influence.

Remodeling and Green & Universal Design

If you are planning to live in your new home for an extended period, an interior designer specializing in aging-in-place or universal design can help create spaces that maximize accessibility for people of all ages and abilities. For example, you can install level landscaping and entry areas that benefit people with a walker or wheelchair as well as those pushing a baby stroller into the house. The addition of grab bars in the shower can be helpful for elderly guests, visiting in-laws or even a teenager on crutches. Quality living arrangements can be suitably designed for all ages.

For help ensuring healthier indoor air quality, or if you want to conserve energy and materials, green design and construction techniques can also be factored into your project. Finally, if you are not quite prepared to tackle all your major remodeling projects at once, an interior designer can help you create a master plan for all your desired projects, help identify priorities and find ways to most efficiently phase the construction to meet your needs, budget and objectives.

During and After Your Move

An interior designer will help situate your furniture, according to plan or as may ultimately be most desired, and assist in locating and hanging artwork, help with accessories placement, finalize window treatments, paint and other color selections so your home performs as you would most like.

Of course, ultimately, the key is to identify a process and outcome with which you are most satisfied. Hopefully this background information helps you to evaluate what might work best for you. To simplify your life a great interior designer can help get you settled quickly so you can start to enjoy the many remarkable opportunities of Bay Area living.

To contact Lisa Koutsky Sten, CID, CGBP, visit www.harrell-remodeling.com. ■

For a list of Certified Interior Designers in your area or to view the CID Pages (a visual directory of CIDs), visit www.ccidc.org/cidpages.



Lisa Koutsky Sten is a senior designer with the Design+ Build firm Harrell Remodeling in Mountain View. Her designs have been recognized repeatedly by local and regional NARI awards, national COTY awards, the NKBA and other trade groups.