

# Decorating Strategies Part 1

"I hate my living room!" "How do I begin redecorating?" "Where do I start?" These are probably the most common questions I hear from people when they are starting a new project.

Before you tear out all of your hair or make costly mistakes at the home improvement or furniture stores, here are a few things you can do before you begin. As with any big project, if you break it down into small pieces it won't seem as overwhelming.

The best way to "break down" your project is by taking a hard look at your room. Write down all of your answers to the following questions. As a designer, I need to know everything about your family's life style.

## What is the purpose of the room?

- How many people in family use the room?
- Do you watch TV, play video games, board games, read, do homework?
- Do your kids need a place to hang out with friends? How old are your children?
- Do the adults need a place to entertain?

## What items do you want to keep? What gets donated to Goodwill? What goes in the trash?

Create a simple spread sheet and write down each piece of furniture in column one. The heading for the next three columns should be KEEP, GOODWILL and TRASH. Start checking off the items. This can be very therapeutic, but be sure you and your spouse are on the same page. If he really loves that recliner and you hate the fabric, reupholstering can save a marriage.

## Look at the "bones" of the room.

- Does it need painting? (New paint is the easiest and cheapest way to update a space)
- Look at the condition of the woodwork and molding? Will a touch up be adequate or does it need a total overhaul?
- How old is the carpet? Will cleaning help or does it need to be replaced?
- Same question with wood or vinyl flooring. Will it need sanding and staining or just cleaning?
- Are there any architectural features? Are the windows beautiful or ordinary?
- Don't forget to look up. The ceiling is often forgotten.
- If you have a fireplace, how often do you use it? Do you like the face, hearth, screen, mantle?

## Assess your accessories.

- Lighting. Do you have a ceiling fixture or a fan? Do they work and are they adequate? Do your lamps provide ambient and task lighting? Have the shades seen a better days?
- Rugs. Are there area rugs and what condition are they in?
- Knick-knacks and collections. What you have on display says volumes about you and your family. What will stay? What will be moved to another room? What will be donated?

- Artwork. What is hanging on your walls? Is it original or a \$25 starving artist special? Or are your walls a blank canvas? This is the time to develop your own personal style. What do YOU like?

### **The Budget.**

This will be the hardest and most important part of the process. You need to determine how much money you have to spend. I need to know that too. We can't move ahead on any project without a dollar amount. Be realistic. Keep in mind that you will save money if you plan to do some of the work yourself, but if you are not a handy person, work contracted out will be part of the overall cost.

Redecorating a room is simply solving a problem. Taking the time to analyze your needs and assess the condition of your room and furniture before you do anything else will make the solution and process much easier.

In a future column I will talk about the next steps in redecorating a room: choosing paint, carpeting and furniture. In the meantime, do your assessment and create a budget.