

Interior designers enhance renovations



Erica Allen

By Kate Carter

Whether you're building a home or undergoing a major renovation, it's worthwhile bringing in an interior designer to help identify your needs and desires, develop a budget, and flesh out a practical design. Interior designers have a remarkable grasp of available products, from fabrics, furnishings, and flooring to lighting, tile, and accent pieces, and they have a keen eye for color and texture combinations and what goes well in certain spaces. Working with an interior designer means the project will be well thought out, and run smoothly and more cost effectively. The end result will be spaces that truly enhance day-to-day living.

Sisler Builders often collaborates with interior designers from the start of a project through completion. Here are two condo renovations where the interior designers were influential in making the transformations come to life.

Multi-generation ski condo

A family from Pennsylvania bought this slope-side condo when it was built in 1980. It has remained in the same family for 40 years.

"I grew up coming to this condo and learned to ski at Stowe Mountain Resort," said the owner. "It's small, and over the years my husband and I thought a lot about how to maximize the space. When the time came to do the renovation, we were ready to go. Top on the upgrade list was to make the condo feel more roomy, durable,



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and attractive. The manager of the homeowners' association recommended Sisler Builders. We reached out to them and after an initial meeting decided they were the ones we wanted to do the work."

They also contacted interior designer Amber Hodgins, who had worked on a house in Sterling Valley that belonged to friends of theirs. They met with Hodgins early on to firm up a plan.

"The condo was built in the 1980s and the owners wanted to update it with a mountain feel, but not super rustic," said Hodgins. "One of the first things I find out is how a family functions and how they want the home to look. I listen to what they want the scope of the project to be and do problem solving along the way. From the beginning we had three earthy design elements in mind: stone, wood, and textured birch wallpaper for accent. A lot of texture was part of the plan from the beginning. We call the finished renovation 'mountain chic.'"

"I've worked Sisler Builders on other projects," Hodgins noted. "It's best when I'm brought in at the beginning to help develop a design with the architect and builder. Early collaboration is when a project goes most smoothly. Sisler Builders let me be in charge of finishes and specs, and their team was good to go with my and the owners' direction."

The focal point is the stone veneer wall of neutral tones, with a new gas fireplace. Warm tones come from floor tiles that resemble wood and a live-edge walnut coffee table and bar top, both made by Sisler Builders' custom woodworking team. The kitchen has new subway tiling, painted cabinets, counters, and appliances. A wall was removed to allow better kitchen access. The kitchen is open to the living room and includes an eat-at wrap-around bar.

The entry area was completely redone to include storage cabinets and closets beneath the staircase. The bedrooms and bathrooms also received a total facelift, with custom bunkbeds in the kids' room, and new tile, vanities, fixtures, and shower enclosures in the bathrooms.



The end result is a stunning, semi-modern condo that will withstand the impact of vacation skiers and remain durable and functional for generations to come. It is undeniably "mountain chic."

"It's perfect," said the owners. "There is not a thing we would do differently. We maximized every inch and we can even work from there. We're madly in love with the place."

This is music to Hodgins' ears. "It feels like it takes forever, with so many decisions to be made along the way. When you're in the thick of it and then see that the owners love it, that truly makes me happy."

On the cover: Slopeside Condo's entire window and door trim package was upgraded and the fireplace surround was changed to a neutral gray granite with painted mantle assembly. Multi-generation Ski Condo's balustrade was modified to lighten and brighten the entry corridor and the space under the staircase was remodeled to provide cabinets and closets.

Above: Multi-generation Ski Condo's new painted kitchen cabinets, quartz counters, farmhouse sink, and subway tile make this kitchen durable and functional. We removed a section of wall between kitchen and living to open up the space. The fireplace has a "wood look" mantle which is actually made from concrete. Photos by Kate Carter.

Slopeside condo

Jessica Vaule of Boston was the interior designer for this three-bedroom condo at Spruce Peak. When the owners, also from Boston, bought the condo, they thought the interior was too dark. They wanted lighter and brighter. Luminous, was how they describe their vision. They chose Vaule because she was recommended by a mutual friend who has a house in Stowe. “She has a lovely eye and understood what we wanted to do,” the owners said.

Vaule, who specializes in high-end work, was aware of Sisler Builders, but had never collaborated with them. “I recommended them because I wanted to work with them, and because of that experience, Steve Sisler has become my favorite contractor to work with.”

Vaule uses a similar approach as Hodgins. Get on board at the beginning! “The people I work for know exactly what they want and come to me with their ideas. They know what they like and don’t like and I facilitate the process from the get-go.”

Durable tiger oak Mafi flooring throughout Slopeside Condo is perfect for skiers. Light colored Vermont maple bunkbeds, painted trim, and warm carpet make this bunkroom quite inviting and airy. Photos by Erica Alen.



In this case, Vaule was the interface between the owners and Sisler Builders. “We talked daily and there was nothing I could throw at the crew that they couldn’t get done. Their positivity made it fun. Working with them was hugely enjoyable.”

With Vaule’s guidance, Sisler Builders completely redid the trim on the extensive windows and doors, modified the faux beams, oversaw the remediation of problems with the original construction, and installed Mafi hardwood flooring, which the owners consider to be one of the condo’s finer features. “Mafi flooring is exactly what you want in a ski condo. It’s super durable and it grounds the space because it is so interesting to look at.” declared the owners.

The condo is much brighter now, and reflects the owners’ tastes and desires. “We and the kids love it. It feels like a beautiful place in Scandinavia.”



In the News

Sisler Builders nurtures upward mobility within our company and promotes employees based on their abilities and job performance.

Rebecca Maxwell, our longtime apartment manager, joined our busy office as an operations and accounting specialist. Rebecca started managing our apartment properties in 2014, because the work schedule was flexible and she could work from home, an important consideration for a new mother. Her children are older now, but her new position continues to provides flexibility so she can balance her home and work schedules.

Leslie Proteau, who started as a part-time data entry specialist with us in 2005, was promoted to office manag-

er. She says she enjoys working for the company because they are family oriented, generous to the community, and willing to accommodate employees’ family needs and scheduling.

We hired Blake Cote in 2020 as a carpenter. We recognized his leadership skills and quickly promoted him to site supervisor.

Carpenter Chad Roy, who has a wealth of entrepreneurial, technical, and operations experience, is helping improve our operations, both in our construction division and soon in our woodshop. We love tapping our employee's unique talents.



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Ask the craftsmen.

Q. What is the difference between dovetail and bow tie joinery?

A. We asked Sisler Builders' master woodworker Glen Waller to answer this question. Waller has built or customized just about every machine in our custom woodworking shop, and he took a step back to explain a foundational component of his trade: joinery.

Prior to the invention of modern wood glues, rectangular mortise and tenon joints were used to connect pieces, usually at 90-degree angles. To improve on precision, the dovetail joint was made by wedging together complementary angles, and it soon became ubiquitous in the trade.

Waller disassembled a recently-made bedside table to demonstrate how the dovetail is used. Instead of gluing the wood perpendicular, or end grain to flat grain, at the table's corners, the dovetail joint interlocks the pieces, despite the wood fibers running in incompatible directions. He also pointed out that even the shop lathe utilized a sliding dovetail, allowing for accurate movement between its metal components.



Left: Bow tie joint. Right: Dovetail joint.

The bow tie works with the same interlocking principle but is generally used for decorative purposes. To join two pieces without using glue, a bow tie shape is inserted with each end locked into separate pieces of wood. For Waller, the bow tie and dovetail are just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to woodworking joints, but understanding them is essential to the contemporary craftsman.

— Jesse McDougall

*Send your building question to
Ask@SislerBuilders.com.
We'll answer it in our next newsletter.*

