

The Perfect Home ~ Not!



BY CAROLIN SANTANGELO

I honestly believe there is no 'perfect house.' My husband and I have built a couple of our own, and even then, were we to build again, each would include changes. There is always room for improvement, and our needs evolve as time passes. Think of your own home – when you bought it, you thought it would be perfect for you. After time, however, you become aware of its idiosyncrasies, and flaws that you have found that don't serve your needs as well as you expected.

It is the designer's responsibility to make practical recommendations about elements of home design. Rules of the trades, codes, best practices and common sense must be taken into consideration for a best solution. It is important that homeowners understand the pros and cons of their own design decisions. There are times when the homeowner has reasons for making a selection that I may not have recommended. However, after review and discussion, a design can often be accommodated to suit the homeowner and incorporate the best design and construction practices.

Design decisions include space planning, room sizing and locating windows and doors for best placement. A well thought out plan should take into consideration the way the room will be used. For instance, if a set of bunk beds is to be used in a small bedroom, and the only wall the bunks can fit against also happens to be in front of the only window in the room, that will not be satisfactory, aesthetically speaking, and it's back to the drawing

board. Clients often desire very large living areas, however, room size can alternatively be too large, and furniture groupings can become awkward if rooms are oversized or ill defined.

The television may not seem important in the whole scheme of things, however, prior to plan development, as an example, it is necessary to know whether a 60" or 32" television will be used. That selection will make a huge difference in the orientation of living spaces. Will the TV be used in a room in which a fireplace is also desired? Decisions about the focal point of the room need to be made by homeowner and designer. If a choice needs to be made between including a fireplace on the wall that encompasses the best views, I may suggest elimination of the fireplace. A fireplace requires a bulky mass that may obstruct window placement and thereby, views. Your view should be addressed foremost to make the most of our island environment.

This further extends to choice of window sizes: scenery should be viewed from a sitting position in a living or bedroom area. Windows that are placed too high to view the outdoors are not serving any purpose except light, and further, may not meet exit (egress) requirements. On the other hand, while we all desire the greatest use of windows to make the most of fabulous views, a balance must be achieved, as excessive use of windows can be costly both from window cost and associated cost of structural reinforcing around windows to meet windstorm-engineering