

smart solutions

Hiring an interior designer on a budget

Not everyone has the luxury of enlisting an interior designer to enhance an entire home. But, you may have the budget for a design pro to do a specific room or an hourly consultation.

Caroline Smith, design principal at Caroline Inc. in Royal Oak, recently introduced two new programs to reach a wider audience.

"Even in times of economic strain, when a full-service interior designer may not be in the budget, there is still a desire for



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creative advice," Smith says.

C-Change begins with an in-home consultation where team members take photos and detailed notes. Back at the studio, they create a PowerPoint presentation with suggestions that are budget-conscious, DIY friendly and doable on weekends.

"This is not a staging service; these solutions are investment-enhancing projects," Smith says of the packages that start at \$580.

The final phase is another in-home consultation to discuss the proposed projects in detail. Each client receives a CD with recommendations that include anything from lighting changes to access-riding and space planning.

C-Color offers a quick fix for a plain or

unfinished home.

"Every aspect of a home, whether it's furniture, fabrics, tile or wood, has a color value," Smith says. "By enhancing and matching those elements with paint, a room or an exterior will feel alive."

For \$150, the designer picks three coordinating pigments to revive a space.

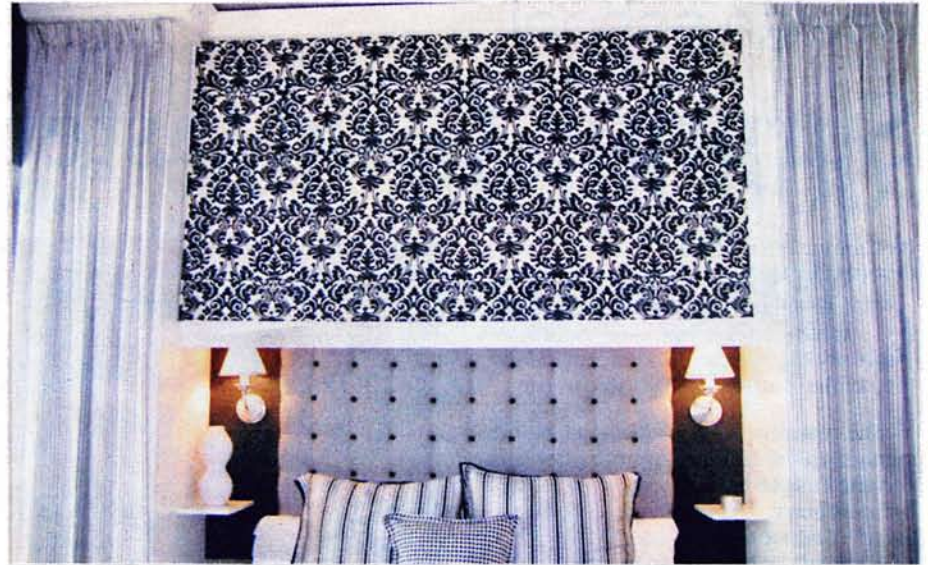
"As a professional interior designer, I know how to balance classic style with current trends," Smith says. "Color palettes can range from soothing and subtle or rich and cozy, to punchy and pop-cultural."

Even her full-service projects can involve cost-saving strategies. For a loft in Royal Oak, the designer created what she calls a "flex room" that does double duty as a home office and guestroom due to space limitations. Because the budget was also limited, Smith had to come up with creative solutions.

Since the room had no closet, built-in storage was incorporated around the bed. Fabric covers provide pattern and texture. The custom cabinetry contains plenty of space for baggage and hanging garments, while another piece across the room functions as a vanity/entertainment center and desk.

To ensure the furniture was cost-effective, Smith chose recycled wood.

"The antique white gives it an elegant appeal," she says. "For the interior of the



Photos by Melissa Parolla

Storage was designed around the bed to add space and make up for the lack of a closet.

cabinetry we used melamine-clad, another cost-effective solution."

To avoid the expense of custom drapery, the built-in was designed to fit ready-made Roman shades. Muslin fabric, which is often used as a liner, became an affordable choice for curtains needed to cover a large span of windows. The cost was only \$6 per yard.

The total cost of the room, including drapery for the windows and storage unit, custom built-ins for storage and an entertainment center/desk/vanity, bed and bedding, came to \$6,500.

By getting things right the first time around, Smith says a designer can save you time and money in the end.

For more information, contact Caroline Inc. at (248) 545-5401 or visit www.carolineinc.com.

Jeanine Matlow is a Metro Detroit interior decorator turned freelance writer specializing in stories about interior design. Her



A multi-functional piece allows the room to double duty as a home office and guestroom.

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