



THE *designer* TOUCH

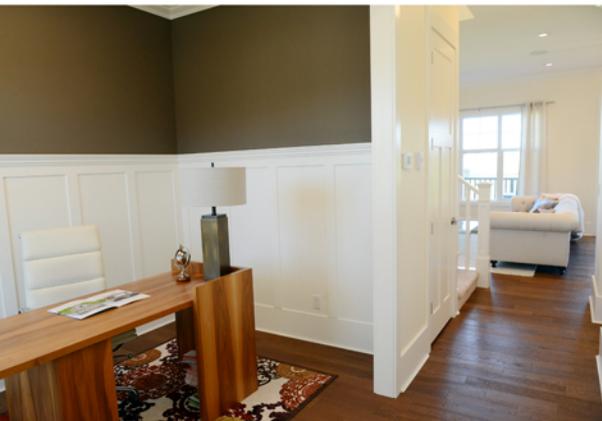
Arbutus Properties offers clients the services of their interior design consultant, Annabelle Richer, to help personalize their Meadows homes. *(Photo courtesy of Arbutus Properties)*

BY HILARY KLASSEN

A desirable middle ground is emerging for home buyers looking to personalize their new home. It occupies the zone between the custom home and the 'spec' production home and appeals to those who seek some input into the process without committing to full customization.

In Rosewood, The Meadows offers Craftsman style homes designed to bring back front porch living. Arbutus Properties is creating the kind of neighbourhood that makes it easier to connect with neighbours and more amenable for kids to play on the street.

To demystify and facilitate the personalization of your new home, Arbutus offers clients the opportunity to work with their interior design consultant, Annabel Richer. "I think if we didn't offer that service, a lot of our clients would find it overwhelming to make all of their selections," she says.



A hallmark of Craftsman style is the exceptional millwork. This Meadows home by Arbutus Properties showcases classic wainscoting, deep baseboards, window casings and crown moulding, evoking character homes from times past, blended with some modern elements. *(Photo: Jeff Lyons)*

Clients can choose from several popular floor plans: the Classic, the Craftsman and the Estate. All three plans offer the exceptional millwork typical of Craftsman style in the window casings, baseboards and wainscoting.

The Classic design presents high-end laminate, thermofoil cabinets, granite kitchen and bath countertops and nine-foot ceilings, in an entry level home. The Craftsman mid-range plan offers 10-foot ceilings, deeper baseboards, and adds crown molding on the main floor.

The appliance package changes slightly with each plan. The Estate package has an upgraded appliance package which includes a gas stove. You'll see the high ceilings, crown molding, deep baseboards and exotic granites. Richer says all their granites are very durable, but exotic granites are a bit harder to come by. The Estate plan is where other finishes like quartz, marble and Italian porcelain come into play.

Some finishing selections can be swapped between plans depending on the wants and budget of the client. The Classic plan can be upgraded to hardwood flooring, for example. Meeting with the client helps Richer elicit the

finer points of the client's dream home. "Usually in my first general meeting with the client, I ask them to bring any inspirational images or items they have, even if it's a teacup or a pillow they like, and they love the colours – anything that's inspiring. That's how I get to know the clients," says Richer.

Richer also guides clients through the implications of their selections. If they want a very bold paint colour she'll help them find the best palette and a way to make it work. "Customization is knowing what the customer's personality is, so I get to know their likes and dislikes, the colours they like, whether they prefer staying with a neutral palette or something that's a little bit bolder and brighter, going with blues or greens or something a little more modern and classic," says Richer.

A second meeting with the design consultant allows clients to fine-tune their selections. "I usually have a palette laid out for them so it's easier to see how that gorgeous tile they chose works with everything else," she says.

Richer's knowledge of various finishing materials is essential to the process. If a messy cook wants a white marble back-

splash, she'll let them know that marble is soft, stains very easily and may not be the best option. For a recent client, Richer selected a spectacular porcelain tile for the ensuite that exactly resembles marble because they weren't keen on the care and maintenance involved with marble.

Arbutus' most popular package is the Craftsman. Clients appreciate the high ceilings, the millwork with the wainscoting, and the finishes included in the package. "I've seen a lot of different styles of what people are looking for. Right now white cabinets are a popular trend. The same with subway tile and going with the darker grout," she says.

Also popular is doing something unique and different in the ensuite compared to the rest of the house, especially if it leans to the grand and luxurious.

The Harvest townhome project and The Morris Laneway development offer two colour boards for each project – a more traditional and a more modern option.

New residents of The Meadows will enjoy the friendly neighbourhood and the growing range of amenities with the Meadows Market coming in. Visit meadowsliving.ca to begin designing your dream! **LS**

Annabelle Richer, design consultant for Arbutus Properties, says many new home buyers like to do something unique and different from the rest of the house in the ensuite, especially if it leans to the grand and luxurious. (Photo courtesy of Arbutus Properties)

