



The Essential Home Design Survival Guide

FIRST EDITION



BY
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Call after reading this guide to schedule your
first appointment

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If you have further questions about your next design or how our process works, email us at david@cottondesign.com or priscilla@cottondesign.com

Enjoy!



Starting Out With Your Design

What you hold in your hands is the culmination of 50 years of our experience working as building designers, interior designers, friends, listeners, and professionals being paid for our guidance.

We have helped hundreds of people develop, design, and then build their dream homes.

“I just found the rugs this morning and love them. It amazes me how you are transforming this house. Last night I actually looked forward to having the meeting in my home.

“I am beginning to feel it is my home instead of just a house. I love the candle holders, vases, pictures, rugs, plants, bowls, decorations, my bookshelves, everything. I love what you did with my book shelves.

“I was proud to invite friends into my home last night for our meeting. The meeting was about the benefit ride on Saturday so they were all horse people. My helper had a slight emergency and had to leave me with the horses after a hard, muddy ride. I made it back to the house

just as people were arriving. All I had time to do was change shoes so I still had my hat on and had dirt and mud on me.

“The minute I walked into my home, I felt at home. I immediately relaxed and had a sense of accomplishment. I felt strong and competent which has been rare lately. I was effective in the meeting and did not slump wondering what people were thinking and I did not nervously chat my head off.

“I was able to focus and was decisive when needed. I was relaxed and had nothing to prove. I could actually sit back and listen instead of nervously commenting on everything. All anyone knows of me is what they have seen in the arena and on a horse. Their reaction towards me was so different.

“It was one of respect and was immediate and very obvious. When we returned to the arena, I was one of the girls again but with obvious respect. I was treated as more of a leader than just another rider.

“I love the feeling that I can be a “barn girl” but with confidence in not just the arena but in life. I love that I can walk into my house and feel relaxed and strong at the same time. Getting back to my old self.

“What a feeling! It amazes me that our surroundings can have such a strong impact on our emotions and those of others.

“And it amazes me that you can read what works for me and then make it happen.”

Enough about us though, lets dive into what this little Survival Guide is going to do for you.

What's in it for you?

When clients hire us, before we get into any questions about colors and design styles, we start asking you questions. Questions like: is there is an existing property, then we ask you about about lifestyles. How you live your life.

We have created this Survival Guide as a way of creating a map of where you want to go with your Dream.

Make A Map

Once you are under way creating your Dream House, this Guide will help you get a big picture view.

It will give you the ability to see where you are going and why you decided to head down this path.

You'll be able to refer to it with all the people who will be giving you advice and help in your journey.

Start With The Easy Parts

The real secret to designing is to start with the elements that you know and probably won't change. This lays out the bare bones of the

space. If you are starting with an existing building, you will want to know (oddly enough):

- Where is the septic tank?
- Where are the property lines?

If you are starting with a “blank slate” an undeveloped piece of property, ask questions like:

- Where are the property lines?
- Are there any preexisting Right of Ways?

Questions of Life Style

The next step is to think about your lifestyle.

- Are you a “shoes on or off” household?
- When you entertain, are you a “Cooking Show?” type of person or do you like to have everything prepared ahead of time and keep the cooking magic in the kitchen?

Ready To Start?

This guide can be used for renovations, additions, and new construction. All the principles are the same.

Answering each of the following set of questions will sit you down and give you the necessary designer’s frame of mind to begin before you begin a construction project. Not every question may apply to your situation or project, but don’t leave it blank. Just write N/A for “Not Applicable.”

What this exercise does is gets you to slow down and really think through your plans.

Let's GO!

Site and Property Concerns

- Where are the edges of the property?
- Does a survey map exist?
- Are there any Right Of Way issues?
- Are there easements that need to be addressed?
- Are there any liens on the property?
- How far away is the town road?
- Are there zoning laws in the municipality where the property is located?
- Where is the septic tank and leach field located or is the house connected to a town system?
- What kind of trees are around the property?
- Does the town maintain the road?
- If not, where does the town maintained road end?

Funding Concerns

- How is your project being funded?
- Does this funding require a timeline that is firm?
- Do you have flexibility?

- Are you concerned about the value of the home as a fiscal investment?

The Shell Of the House

(For existing properties)

- What type of foundation does the house sit upon?
- What type of roof covers the house?
- What is the material that is the siding of the home?
- Has the house ever had auxiliary weather proofing?
- What type of windows are installed?
- Has the roof ever leaked?
- Can you see slight water stains on the walls below the eaves?

Note: Moisture in the walls will diminish the R value of some insulation materials

Utilities

- What is the heating and/or cooling system of the house?
- What are the primary and secondary climate control systems?
- I.E. Wood stove, oil hot water
- What is the age of these systems?
- Where is the power and phone connected to the building?
- Is a solar electric system something that interests you?
- Is there a well for water?
- How often does the house have the electric service interrupted in a year?
- Is there back up power?

- What is the heating and/or cooling cost of the house currently?
- What is the depth of the water table typically on the property?

The Number of People Living Inside

- How many people are going to be living in the house?
- Are there residents that need special assistance?
- How about in a few years?
- Will there be children growing up here?

Lifestyles

- Are you Right Handed or Left Handed?
- Are you the shoes on or shoes off type?
- What types of flooring do you prefer?
- When coming home, what are the first three things you'll do?
- Do you require extra light in the winter months?
- At what temperature do you prefer the living spaces?
- Use some words and or images to describe your style of living.
- Do you require the bath be separate from the shower?
- What are the last three things you do before going to bed?
- Do you have an office at home?
- Is office used for family finances or is this office used for a business?
- Do you see clients at this office?
- Do you have pets that live with you?

- Do the pets require a door for letting themselves in and out?
- Is there a view that you are trying to capture?
- How often do you entertain friends and family?

Kitchens

- Are you left or right handed?
- Do you like to ripen fresh fruit and vegies on the counter?
- Do you like lighting that is under the upper cabinets shining on the counter?
- Do you know about the secret triangle in the kitchen: refrigerator - sink - stove and which way do you move through it (clockwise vs. counterclockwise)?
- Are you someone that composts? Do you have the bucket on the counter or like it to be below the counter?
- Recycling, do you do this often and have small bags of it or do you like to recycle once a month so require greater storage (or so)? Prefer to store in the kitchen or another room?
- Do you like having appliances on the counter for easy use or prefer less items on the counter top?
- The pots and pans that are used frequently, do like them hanging from hooks above the stove or do you prefer them stored away?
- Do you prefer under counter cabinets that have big drawers or do you prefer shelves with doors?
- Are you a gas flame chef or an electric burner chef?
- Do you have cookbooks that you refer to frequently?
- Do you want the cook books displayed nearby?

Kids in the Kitchen

- Do the kids have cups, plates, and utensils that are unique to them and do you keep it so they can have access to such?
- Will the kids use the kitchen sink to wash their hands?

Dishwashing

- Who does the dish washing (mostly)?
- Do you use an automatic dishwasher?
- When you wash by hand do you prefer to wash from left to right or right to left?

Entertaining In the Kitchen

- When you cook for guests, do you like to have a cooking show or do you prefer to have everything prepared so you can sit and chat?
- Do you have a preference of the temperature of the wine and how it is served?
- When you shop, is there a bunch of stuff that needs a lot of counter space to unpack or is this not a concern?
- Do you have a juicer?
- Is there something about your morning that is almost like a ritual (i.e. making coffee or chai)? Would you like an area for this (i.e. coffee bar)?
- Are there table settings that are for different use and time (everyday vs special occasion)?
- Are there any notes that you are inspired to discuss?
- Would you like the Living area to be open to the Kitchen?

Enhanced Living

- Do you require a hot tub outside?
- Do you require one inside?
- Is there a pool?
- Is the pool heated?
- Is there a garage?
- Is the garage nearest the primary entrance to the house?
- Is there a guest house?
- Where is the guest house located relative to the Master Bedroom?
- How often will you use this home?
- Do you use window shades or blinds?
- Where have you lived previously?
- Which place had your favorite _____?
- Where are you the most comfortable in your house?
- What times of the day are you there?

That's it! Your Done!

Congratulations and nice work.

We know some of those questions seemed a little personal, but you know... each question has been a part of a home design in our history of designing buildings.

Now what you have is the ability to look at what you value the most in your home lifestyle.

A Word of Caution

When you go to share your Dream Home ideas with others, they often change your idea and apply their dream home ideas to it. Beware of this as you'll feel like you are not being heard.

This is the time where you need to be heard and allowed to really think through the way you live your life.

You will probably hear things like: “Oh that’s cool- but I like to have the sink over here so that I can “blah blah blah...”

From a builder, you might hear: “All I need to build this is your napkin sketch and a deposit.”

Beware.

Want Some Help?

The shortest path to achieving your Dream Home is through a well thought out plan.

The least expensive path to achieving your Dream Home is with clear and concise plans.

A builder can create an accurate budget of money and time from clear drawings that are a result of your thoughts.

We provide the straightest path to achieving success with your Dream Home project.

David has been designing buildings for 50 years. With hundreds of projects built— from the dream home that is right on the slopes of a ski resort to the fire station of Newfane, Vermont we can listen to you and talk to the builders.

Our specialty is designing for the real world.

This means that we listen to the client’s lifestyle ideas and dreams and translate it into something that fits their budget, time, and dreams.

We act as the intermediary, organizing your thoughts and dreams into a coherent plan that can then be handed over to the builders—technicians that will assemble the your Dream.

We are the fastest way to implement your next construction project.

It is too easy to get caught up in the newest building products and gadgets—but these do nothing for you and the big picture, your Dream Space.

One thing I can say is that some things don't change with housing you and your family. This is where we start the design process.

A Short Story About David

When he got out of the United States Marine Corps in the late Sixties, he went off to work for Uncle Abe. His uncle's business was structural engineering and design of major buildings in Boston, Massachusetts.

The Marines taught him the foundation of discipline and attention to detail. He thought he was done with drill sergeants scouring his presentation and picking the finest of pieces of lint off his uniform -- yelling in his face "that's two weeks on KP Marine!".

David soon found that working for his uncle as an apprentice drafter put the scrutiny and discipline of a drill sergeant to shame.

This is where David's full understanding of how the mechanics of buildings are put together. All the materials and the craftsmen who work with steel, concrete, wood, and glass are really creating spaces for people to operate in.

The engineer's mind is taught to create the most efficient structure to accomplish the task. Cost concerns are heavily engrained in the engineer's mindset.

David's skills as a cost conscious building designer certainly have not diminished in the fifty years he's been designing custom buildings. In fact, his knowledge of construction costs is second to none.

Builders Love Our Plans

He communicates your Dream Home into instructions that all the builders love to use. David takes care to communicate clearly to the builder so there won't be any misunderstandings. He then will do site visits at precise times to verify that the builders are not deviating from your plans.

It Doesn't Exist Unless It's On Paper

If a builder is unclear about how to build your home then he will increase the cost at one point or another. Either at the front end during the bid process or after you are under way and the cost shows up as a surprise.

Construction of a custom Dream Space requires many people and layers of construction; knowing the Chain of Command is VERY important. The other component is being able to See the Big Picture.

David has got both components.

He can speak knowledgeably to you about what will be happening next and what to expect.

Like: "we can expect the builders to be hunting during these weeks of November coming up so don't be surprised when they aren't there as early as normal."

Or

"I noticed the concrete crew was scratching their heads-- I will speak to the General Contractor and alert him to the situation."

Looking For The Dog

Priscilla on the other hand grew up on Long Island, NY where, as she tells it:

"My mother used to take us on tours of the old estates in our Long Island neighborhoods by pretending to look for our dog.

"Olllllllieeee!" she would yell out the window of our Oldsmobile.

"I was the middle child of six kids. My bothers and sisters (that were around) and I would laugh and yell out in unison: "Ollllllieeee!"

"We would roll in and out of driveways of the houses that you couldn't quite see from the road and under the pretense of finding that wandering black lab [who was back at home, probably on the couch].

"We would get to see these amazingly intricate homes.

"My mother would bring us to estate auctions as well -- always pointing out the antiques and heirlooms that were being sold.

Mom's Refined Taste

"My mother would always take the time to point out the smallest of details about the Tiffany Collections or how the silverware was different than the stainless, and how one fabric is weighted and another is so light and translucent. Those little details brought my attention to how elements could be combined to create spaces that are perfectly composed."

Priscilla's fine art training then gave her the tools to know the rules behind the designs.

"It is just as important to allow for the white space of the canvas to be unaltered as it is to lay in the perfect color of blue."

Priscilla's water color paintings have been shown throughout New England and have sold for thousands of dollars.

"Watercolors are fabulous but when I discovered oil and printmaking-- textures and patterns really began to "POP" for me."

Today, Priscilla continues to seek out other artists to learn and work with.

"My seamstress is such an amazing artist. We have worked together for many years creating window treatments and coverings. I was completely blown away when I asked her to be a designer for a fashion show we were producing. Her dresses were absolutely amazing!"

Giving Back

Priscilla works with a group of friends to produce an event a year that will benefit a regional non-profit company.

"We call ourselves Team Decor and it has four core members with loads of folks on the periphery.

"We chose to throw an event for the local Hospice organization and were inspired by the second hand clothing store that they operate. This inspired us to produce a fashion show using local designers. Wow, what an event! Five hundred people came to the event and we raised over \$25,000.00 for Brattleboro Area Hospice.

"As far as the design experience -- we could really let our hair down. All of those should's and can'ts had to get thrown out if we were going to make this a memorable event.

"You know, like everything we do, we weren't going to go only part way -- we knew that we had to deliver a world class event to really feel satisfied with ourselves. It was a very challenging task"

What To Do Next

The next step for you to take is to create an inspiration board of all the images that you can find that make you feel great!

Start to assemble these from magazines and photographs.

We do this with our clients and have such a great time seeing where folks go with their inspirations.

We discuss some of their thoughts before the exercise and then we interpret the images for them afterwards.

It can be very enlightening for some people who think they like one thing and their inspiration board points to a design style of something completely different.

We love this exercise!

Call Us For Your First Consultation

If you are interested in scheduling a time to hear more about the process of designing your next home, just give us a call at 802-365-7277.

Again there are no right or wrong answers -- only ideas and inspirations.

The Home Design Survival Guide is the result of our thirty plus years designing with thousands of people. We have helped them achieve their Dream Homes. We help people rejuvenate when at home; to become better at being themselves and feel inspired about life.

Take your next step towards this lifestyle and schedule your first consultation appointment with us now.

Sincerely,

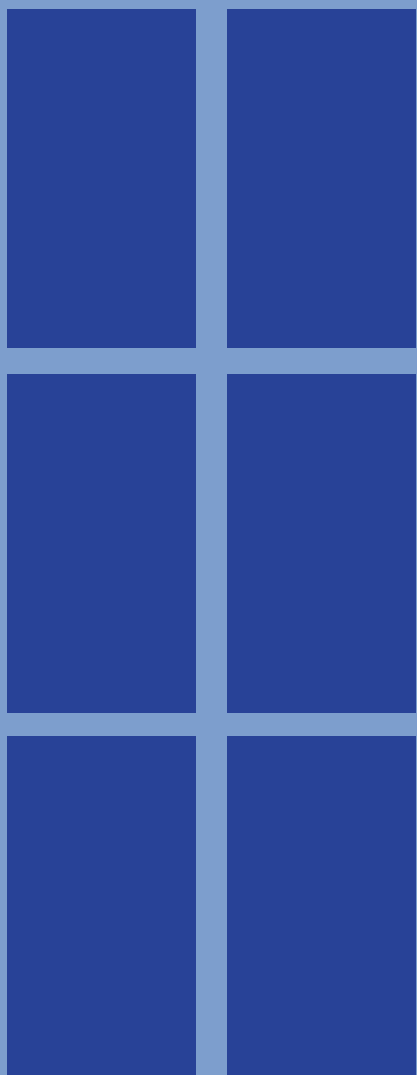
Priscilla and David Cotton

Cotton Design Associates, LLC

P.S. We have one more referral:

“If you are going to build, you would have to be absolutely CRAZY to NOT hire Priscilla and David.”

Andy Greenfield



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architecture
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Schedule an appointment with us to find
out how our design process can make
your life frictionless!

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