

New Style on the Residential Spectrum

Then: A cookie-cutter design

Now: A home that evokes the resident's deepest sense of style

An elegant front-entry foyer and formal living room are indicative of this custom home's style.

After more than a decade in the architecture world, **Carolyn Stewart** was ready to tackle the world of residential design. In 2007, she founded her own firm, **Concept To Design Inc.**, which focused on taking a home from inception to completion. After nearly five years of relentless effort, Stewart has made a career breathing life into standard residential design.

AS TOLD TO SETH PUTNAM

I'VE ALWAYS BEEN INTRIGUED BY GOOD USE OF SPACE and beautiful houses. I started my postsecondary schooling at the British Columbia Institute of Technology, thinking I would go on to study architecture at a university, but afterward I started working and really enjoyed the hands-on experience.

BEFORE FOUNDING CONCEPT TO DESIGN in 2007, I worked for a decade in architecture and interior design. I feel blessed for those experiences; they helped me build strong relations and understand the design and construction industry. I realized I was a generalist in the field, and that it was fine. So now we embrace design from various angles (design, construction, development, city planning). My passion, however, has always been residential design, so I set it up in a way that allowed me to spend more time with individual clients on custom-home designs.

CONCEPT TO DESIGN IS SPECIAL because we are a boutique company. We cater to individual needs and guide them





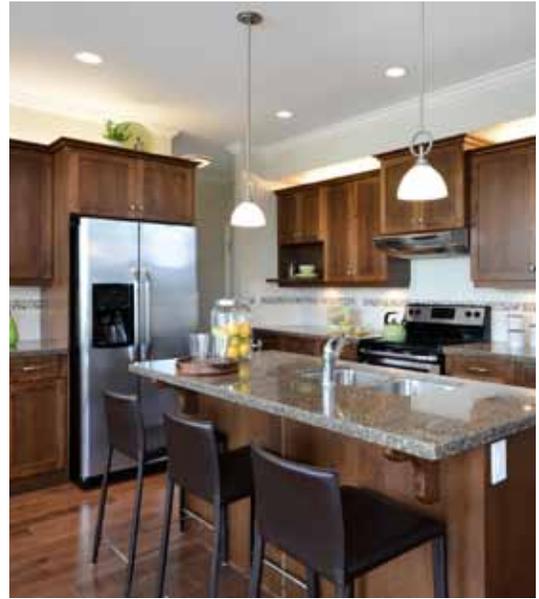
with professional expertise. Our level of service can vary from hourly consultations to full-design packages, to suit the client. The number of services we offer is also a benefit; we strive to work on projects where I can design the home, then continue on the interior as well. It creates a more cohesive, consistent product. And we work with everyone from private owners to multilot developers. Recently, we've become even more versatile through our work on a private school and a senior-housing facility.

WHEN WE'RE APPROACHING A NEW PROJECT, it's extremely important to see the client's existing home so we can get a sense of their lifestyle. A well-designed home is not just pretty paint colours and new furniture; we like to go

deeper. The challenge: how can we make their home better reflect who they are?

FIRST WE LOOK AT LAYOUT. The flow and practical elements have to work first. Then there's the shell—things like window sizes, ceiling height, and decorative millwork. Then the finishing materials and colours. We can further reflect the client's style—whether it be with casual, classic-honed limestone floor tile, or crisp, contemporary, polished porcelain tile. Even simple, inexpensive wall or floor tile can appear high-end when combined with some glass or natural-stone accents. The icing on the cake is the furnishings, window coverings, artwork, and accessories. We always have this final vision

Above: The custom show suite of the Blume Townhomes houses a striking, modern interior within its classic frame.



Photos: Andrew Doran

Above: Concept To Design's ability to balance the interior and exterior can be seen in this home, located in the Vantage subdivision at the Surrey Golf Course in Surrey, BC.

brewing in our minds from the time the house plans are only hand-drawn sketches.

WE RECENTLY COMPLETED A FRENCH PROVINCIAL HOME, and we were able to design virtually every element. This home is a one-level rancher with a full basement. They wanted all their main living and sleeping areas on one level, with the basement reserved for the entertaining area (home theatre, custom wine cellar and bar, home gym, and guest bedrooms, as well as the impressive custom-paneled gentleman's library-style home office).

THE CLIENT'S THEME WAS "FINE DINING IN BLUE JEANS." It's a very fitting phrase, as the whole house has a quiet

grandeur. We were able to capture formality in the trim details and light fixtures, but we kept it cozy and relaxed by using warm earth tones and simple ceiling details with dark wood beams; custom, wrought-iron stair railings; and oil-rubbed bronze lighting and hardware. The basement evokes a Tuscan villa, with its stonework and beams—perfect for relaxed entertaining. It also reflects the client's passion for wine collecting.

ULTIMATELY, IT'S ABOUT CAPTURING THE CLIENT'S DESIRE. By the time we get to the finishing details, we have been working so closely with the clients for so long that it has become a natural progression of shared vision based on what the client will love. That's what's important to us. **CBQ**