

Coordinated design, build services available from same firm

Kathryn Hexum Interiors has changed its name to Kathryn Hexum Company and has expanded its interior design services to include homebuilding, remodeling and kitchens.

Since the beginning of this century, there has been a history of bad feelings between builders and designers, before which time builders and designers/architects were often one and the same. Designers feel that builders don't understand design, and builders feel that designers often don't understand construction techniques and cost limitations. Kathryn Hexum Company is attempting to bridge the gap. Unlike many traditional homebuilders, where a design can stop with the selection of a floorplan, Kathryn prefers to extend that design process throughout the planning and construction phases of the project, inevitably resulting in a more appropriate finished product.

Kathryn designs her homes from the inside out. "Usually a client has some idea of the type of house he or she wants. They may even have a rough sketch or a floor plan of what they had in mind. Then, after lots of questions, when we feel we have a clear idea of what the customer is looking for, we begin designing." Many builders build a home assuming the furniture will somehow fit. Kathryn believes this can be a dangerous and costly mistake. She prefers to design the floor plan around workable furniture arrangements, a skill developed during her 13 years as an interior designer. "We see to it that the perfect spot for the sofa or armoire doesn't end up with a heat vent under it."

Once the floor plan is completed and approved with an exterior elevation in mind, the full working plan can be completed by a draftsman or architect at considerable savings to the customer. Financial planning and estimating is also of critical importance.

"We begin with a very rough cost-per-square-foot estimate to arrive at an approximate idea of what size home the customer can afford to build. Then we proceed to estimate costs for everything on a client's wish list ... right down to the interior selections of draperies, carpets, furniture. It takes a lot of time and work, but is a very important step in establishing priorities and a realistic cost projection before construction begins."

Because the process calls for a close working relationship between designer/builder and client, it's very important that the client feel comfortable in his relationship with the staff at Kathryn Hexum Company. It is important that there be an establishment of mutual trust and respect so enthusiasm for the project can continue and any problems or questions that pop up can be handled in a positive, creative way. It's also important for the client to mentally prepare himself or herself for the rigors of a construction project. Quality of construction is also a big issue and something taken very seriously.

Since Kathryn Hexum Company has its own crew of workmen on staff, quality remains constant and under the supervision of Kathryn's husband, Rick, who is responsible also for arranging financing. "We think we have some of the finest tradesmen in the area ... they are real artisans," says Rick. Their lead carpenter, Duane Hamm, has worked on various construction projects with Rick since 1976. He was brought up in the trade and was taught by his father. He takes great pride in his work and so far has found no challenge that Kathryn has given him insurmountable. Together they have been involved in more than 50 custom homes and townhouses over the past 10 years in Rochester.

With all this time and energy pouring into the construction end of Kathryn Hexum Company, what's happening with the service relating to interior design only? "I'm thrilled to say that Aurella Brandt, with whom I've been working for the past six years, has stepped in to fill my shoes," Kathryn says. She and "Sugar" usually meet with the customer on the first appointment together and dis-

cuss a plan of action. Then Sugar takes it from there. "After working with her for so many years, I am totally confident in her capabilities and good taste," says Kathryn. Because the number of clients an individual designer can work with at one time must be limited, Sugar prefers to work by appointment only.

On most interior design projects, her design fee is covered by purchasing merchandise through the studio. Only on small projects, or in cases where a client wishes her assistance selecting items from outside sources, there is an additional charge for services. "Comparing apples to apples — that is, comparing

equal quality, our prices are no higher than store prices. And when a person comes to us they also get design expertise."

In the past, Kathryn Hexum Company has been involved in commercial as well as residential projects. The commercial work includes the new C.O. Brown Insurance office, Norwest Bank-37th Street branch, and the Ryan/Vanderheyden law offices.

Her office is located at 1002 North Broadway — in a renovated old house. Kathryn is a professional member of ASID, the American Society of Interior Designers.



Above, Kathryn Hexum stands with her building crew, from left, Duane Hamm, Mark Theros and Larry Klein, among the finest craftsmen in the area. At left, lead carpenter Duane Hamm works in the kitchen of a new home. Below is the design and interior design team of Aurella "Sugar" Brandt and Kathryn Hexum.

