

# NEW HOMES

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## Show homes rich in decor ideas

Developers want projects to look their best, so why not 'borrow' tips?

PEDRO AFRAS  
Times Colonist

Looking for new home decorating ideas? Head to the nearest show home. A well-decorated model house or suite (in a condominium) represents a home with its best foot forward. Show homes feature current design trends in paint colours, flooring materials, hardware and window treatments.

Show homes are increasingly common as builders and developers look to market their projects months and sometimes years before completion.

Developers are aware their projects look better when they are furnished, so show homes are decorated for maximum appeal — eye candy that helps sell the rest of the development. A staged interior makes it easier for prospective buyers to envision how their furniture and other accessories will look, given the show home's design elements.

"We package the interior design so people don't have to," says Deborah Patterson, in-house designer for the Citta Group. "In all our projects,

we offer consumers the ability to mix and match, which gives them the flexibility to put their own spin to the finished product."

Patterson designed the interior for Citta's Oceanwood project, one of five finalists in one of the best-residential-interior categories for the CARE awards. Sponsored by the Victoria chapter of the Canadian Homebuilders' Association, the awards will be awarded at the end of October.

Patterson warns those looking for ideas to be careful about borrowing elements from a show home because a design that looks fabulous in one setting might not necessarily work in another.

"In a show home, all the things are bought with an eye toward matching with each other," she says. "Most people will invariably have personal items collected over years they need to fit in."

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THREE POINT PROPERTIES PHOTO



DEBRA BRASH, TIMES COLONIST

Show homes in the Bishop's Green project on Saltspring Island, above, and in the Breakwater, a waterfront luxury townhome development in James Bay, are both finalists in one of the best-interiors categories for the 2008 CARE Awards sponsored by the Victoria chapter of the Canadian Homebuilders' Association.

Interior designer Danielle Campagne, right, who worked on both projects, says show-home decor usually reflects the community in which it is built. "It's what's appropriate for the target market."



DEBRA BRASH, TIMES COLONIST

# Comfort a common theme in displays



DARREN STONE, TIMES COLONIST

The Oceanwood show home, a Gordon Head project by Citta, is one of five finalists in one of the best-residential-interior categories for the CARE awards. Show homes can be a treasure trove of decorating ideas. But Deborah Patterson, who designed the Oceanwood's interiors, warns those looking for ideas to be careful about borrowing elements from a show home because a design that looks perfect in one setting might not necessarily work in another.

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Patterson is quick to point out that decorators can help clients incorporate treasured furniture pieces and mementos into a modern setting.

Developers often offer a choice of themes and looks for their homes. The two most common are the traditional and the contemporary looks.

A show home's style is geared to appeal to the project's target market. The decor is based on what the developer believes the prospective buyers value most. If they gauge the market successfully, eventual buyers of the homes frequently ask to purchase the furnishings along with the house.

Some designers eschew the picture-perfect look for one that has more character.

"We didn't want our show home to feel like a show home," says Danielle Campagne, owner of IC Interior Design Group and co-designer for the Breakwater, another CARE-award finalist. The James Bay project's waterfront luxury townhomes have an upscale, urban-chic feel, but the rooms are lavished with antiques and original art instead of store-bought accessories. "We felt a more eclectic mix-and-match would give the unit more chemistry—a lived-in feel. That's why we chose one-of-a-kind art pieces to give life to the decor."

Show home decor usually reflects the community in which the house is built. This gives out-of-town buyers a good touchstone as far as local tastes, designers say. For the Bishop's Green project on Salt Spring Island—Campagne's second of two projects among the five CARE-award finalists—she chose to give the show home's interior a more whimsical look, with lambs in the kitchen and more natural, comfortable materials.

"It's what's appropriate for the target market," she says. "There is a big arts community on Salt Spring, so we put in an unfinished picture on an easel on an upper landing."

While all the show homes exemplify a clever use of space and innovative design, they also share a common theme—comfort. All the interiors are warm places to relax after a day at work.

"I want people to feel as if they could kick back and put their feet up," says Glenda Castelsky, principal of Details Interiors of Qualicum Beach. She created the interior design for the CARE-award finalist Eaglewood at Qualicum Beach development. Because the target client would move from a big city, she designed the show home as a retreat, with lots of slate and wood interposed with warm fabrics. "I wanted the decor to be realistic and something that tells the buyer that they can actually live there."

While looky-loos at open houses go away with ideas for their own homes, it takes more than buying the same furnishings and using the same colour palette to recreate what a designer or decorator has designed.

"It's more of a feeling than physical attributes," says John Larson, owner of C.A. Design, responsible for the building design of Eaglewood at Qualicum Beach. "It's as much geometry as the physical materials. It's the ability to create harmony from a collection of pieces—and not everybody has that skill."

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ALEX WATSON, STPHOTOWORKS

Some eye-catching elements — such as the recessed ceiling with moulding in a geometric pattern in the dining room of the Cliffs over Maple Bay development's model home — are difficult for a homeowner to add to an existing decor scheme.



CAMELOT HOMES PHOTO

In the show home for the Eaglewood at Qualicum Beach development, designer Glenda Castelsky put an emphasis on comfort in the decor. "I want people to feel as if they could kick back and put their feet up," she says of the look she created for the CARE-award finalist. The show home features lots of slate and wood interposed with warm fabrics. "I wanted the decor to be realistic and something that tells the buyer that they can actually live there."