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MOTION TO MINGLE

BY SANDI BARNES

KITCHENS HAVE A COMPELLING FORCE THAT DRAWS FAMILY MEMBERS AND FRIENDS TO GATHER IN ITS SPACE.

If visitors are spending time in your kitchen when they could be in other, more comfortable rooms, then why not bring comfort into the kitchen? This room can look and feel as welcoming as your living room.

Our designer, Alli Mohl, along with Julie Kavanagh of JK Designs, put in motion a plan to create a comfortable and welcoming kitchen for this homeowner. Apart from refreshing the outdated look, the client's goal was clear: create a space for visiting family members to gather with ease. For this to happen, the first step was to knock down the wall between the kitchen and dining room, creating an airy, open area that makes it easier to stay connected.

When designing, I like to think of a kitchen as having an entertaining side and a working side. I first gather information from the homeowners, asking about their stage of life, their family (both near and far), and who does most of the cooking. These details help to ensure that the flow of the kitchen is conducive to their lifestyle. Kitchens these days are not just about cooking and cleaning. Today's kitchen is more multifunctional than ever and needs to have the flexibility for various activities to take place.

The full overlay cabinets are locally manufactured, and the shaker doors painted in Sherwin-Williams Alabaster brighten the whole room. Adding some interest and complementing the veining in the countertop is the island, painted in Sherwin-Williams Agreeable Gray.

Consider incorporating a conversation area with comfortable furniture, appealing fabrics, and warm lighting. Homeowners are



PHOTOGRAPHY BY MIRANDA REGER.



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now installing multiple appliances in locations to better tend to the needs of visitors and family members. The bar area is positioned for visitors to help themselves while remaining part of the conversation. Perhaps you have small children? One of the easiest ways to draw children into the kitchen is to create a space for them. Stock base cabinets with after-school snacks and kid-friendly plates or include an undercounter refrigerator to store drinks for easy access, allowing your dinner prep to continue without interruption.

Hilary Farr, co-host of *Love It or List It*, says, “Great kitchens are a must-have. A place to relax and cook for friends and family. A gathering place for family of all ages and guests.” Embrace the reality and implement changes to your kitchen that make it easy to mingle and hang out. The kitchen may be the heart of the home, but with a few improvements, it can become a great gathering space and so much more. ♦



SANDI BARNES is a senior designer at **IMPACT DESIGN RESOURCES**. Contact Sandi at 704-677-5338, visit IMPACTDESIGNRESOURCES.COM, or tour the South End showroom.