

LOOKING UP

Dennis Gehman of Gehman Design Remodeling shares how ceiling design can enhance the flow and feel of a room.

BY LEIGH STUART

Some people might not consider a ceiling as part of a home renovation, but Dennis D. Gehman, a Master Certified Remodeler and president of Gehman Design Remodeling in Harleysville, is not one of them. For him and his team, a thoughtfully planned ceiling space can add brightness and personality to just about any room.

“Generally speaking, we do these treatments in larger rooms, where the ceiling is flat drywall painted white or off-white and just seems to go on forever,” he says. “I would say family rooms, living rooms, and master bedrooms are the three most common places where we are doing these upgrades. People are just looking to add interest.”

Options Abound

One means of achieving interest is by raising the height of a ceiling via vaulted (sloping in one direction) or cathedral (sloping in two directions, usually meeting in the middle) style. Homeowners can also opt for a tray ceiling, which is flat but features a square or rectangular raised center area; this is most often seen in second-floor master bedrooms, according to Gehman.

“It can be done on the first floor, but many people don’t think, ‘What about the floor of the room above?’” he adds. “If you have a nine- or 10-foot ceiling, you can bring

the edges down versus bringing the ceiling up.”

For basements, some choose suspended drop ceilings featuring metal gridwork suspended by wires, dropped below the pipes and wires serving the floor above. One selling point: ease of access to utilities.

“There are some really nice-looking tiles, which a lot of people automatically think will be less expensive than drywall,” Gehman says. “If you go with generic tile, yes, they will be, but if you want something really nice-looking, it can cost way more than just a painted drywall ceiling.”

Coffered ceilings feature beams, usually forming a pattern of squares or rectangles. This more formal style of décor juxtaposes that which employs rough-hewn beams to achieve a more rustic look. Tongue-and-groove wood planks commonly used for flooring are starting to make an appearance on ceilings in homes around the region.

Bright Ideas

“Any time you’re going to finish a ceiling with something special, you’re going to want to think about lighting,” Gehman advises. “Is the lighting what you want it to be? If not, we can run wires and drill holes before the new ceiling is put up.”

Modern technology abounds with innovative solutions that are advancing at the speed of light, including LED, or light-emitting diode, technology.

“LED wafer lights are the modern version of recess lighting,” Gehman explains. “One of the great advantages of wafer lights is that they are only as thick as half-inch drywall,

and most have at least a 50,000-hour warranty.”

For those with concerns about the “harsh” nature of old-style LED lights, fear not—newer models feature variable settings.

“Initially, people were put off by the harsh white-blue light of LEDs,” Gehman says. “Many now come with adjustable Kelvin color. That can change the look of the light to be warmer, like traditional incandescent bulbs. Some even have Wi-Fi so you can adjust for mood right on your phone.

“Some people don’t care for the look of recess lights or wafer lights,” he continues. “With LED, you can also get them in strip lights. Those you can put under wall cabinets or shelves in cupboards that have glass doors. We’ve done a couple projects where we inserted strip lights behind crown molding. That way, you don’t see the fixture—just the lights.”

A Clear Picture

Gehman recommends that those looking to update their ceilings and/or corresponding lighting look to a contractor who can provide a 3D rendering by way of computer-aided design (CAD).

“Visualization technology is very important,” he advises. “Even colors—computers aren’t 100 percent there yet, but they’re getting mighty close. With CAD, you can measure everything to scale to make sure things are proportionate to each other.”

In the end, like all style choices, the decision ultimately comes down to the homeowner.

“Everyone wants to feel good about their home, and to make it their own,” Gehman says. “You want to create a space you want to show off, so you can be proud of it.” ■

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