



beauty and the budget

This terrific living space was pulled together with more creativity than cash. Read on to see exactly how.

Photo and Text: *Elise Lipp Mowbray* | Photographs: *Bobby J. Falkenberg*



LONG-LEGGED, BLUE-PAINTED
WICKER CHAIRS, A
MUSTARD-YELLOW SOFA, AND
A WHITE COFFEE TABLE
WITH TWO WICKER BASKETS
UNDERNEATH. A VASE OF
PINK FLOWERS, A LAMP, AND
A BUNCH OF CACTUS PLANTS
COMPLETE THE LIVING AREA.

The little world of decorating doesn't take the creative color schemes you'd see in a hot new Atlanta design. Sherry Hart knows this, and it helps to size her clients to budget-friendly rooms that can be easily updated when better fashion trends take a turn.

It's not like it used to be, when you decorated a room to last forever," Hart says. "When I have a client come that they need to keep a restaurant or a worker's quarters because they spent \$4,000 on it, I tell them that I quote a lot of money on things people may back when, but I'm not going to wear them down."

It's all just a bit of balance, where a Target T shirt may top a Bloomingdale's dress. Hart is very smart and uses the lowest cost of materials and quality when it comes, though, to a lot of accessories and iron-on tape.

Homeowner Kelly Price called Hart to help coordinate a complete post-lease sale a multipurpose space where guests can spend the night, sometimes can take a break from the site, and her own storage bins can hang out with their friends. Hart accepted the challenge and embraced a set-to-go decorating budget of less than \$10,000. Here are the first steps she followed:

Create a blank canvas

After wanted to start with a clean slate, so her first step was ripping out wall-to-wall and carpet, a additional reminder of the space's previous state as a worker's room. Because the budget was so tight, Hart decided to go in a bare wooden floor covering, which is durable and fairly cheap for the 25- by 33-foot space—about \$900.

Find a starting point

Hart knew that in a small space such as this one, the table would influence all other design decisions. She measured the room and determined that 34 inches would be the ideal size for the piece. And, because the room had to accommodate guests, she looked only at deeper tables. Eventually Hart found the perfect one with neutral, solid color upholstery for \$1,200 at a Southshore clearance store.

To add color with accessories, Hart had her eye on some designer Wendy wood fabric and some pretty striped materials from Kravet and from Osborne and Little. "I always tell people to start with fabric, and then pick your paint, not the other way around," Hart says. After choosing the table and fabric, she worked on a pale blue guest Benjamin Moore mix for the walls to tie everything together. Stripping wallpaper and properly painting the room cost about \$1,000.

Shop 'til you drop

To save on furnishings, Hart turned to some favorite small-business Coz The World Market from worker club chairs for \$209 each, Ballard Design (before pre-sale) dining room table for \$290—the Atlanta-based catalog company has good deals on its clearance center and as its online Great Sale if you don't mind a few scratches). Coz's Coz Barrel table chair set for \$275, and great old Target (now HomeGoods accessories).

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Pull a room together cheaply and quickly

Designer Sherry Hart shares her budget-wise tips:

• "Be willing to ditch your old stuff." Sometimes, when you try to decorate a room around something you already own, you end up spending more in the long run. "I always remind, 'I would not desire to go forward and don't look back into it.' That's how you don't get a fresh look."

• "Consider professional help—when just for shopping." Most people don't sell their own furniture and accessories, Sherry says, and everyone benefits from a fresh eye. Even if you can't afford a designer for the entire project, hire someone for a few hours to shop with you and figure out new ways to combine items. It might be the best \$200 or so you spend.

• "Look for ways to transform something that might inspire you a particular piece." Sherry likes seeing details of fabric or patterns existing on chairs and accessories. She's not afraid to repart an accessory or re-cover existing furniture. The floor lamp she got from Target had a good base, but she replaced the shade with a bigger version.

• "Pick an idea on the items color palette as you're not usually confused." In this case, the shades of blue, gray, and ivory white are a soothing scheme.

• "Don't get hung up on items being better." "If you're getting a chair or a table or a lamp, just know that you're probably want to change it out in a few years," Sherry says. "Don't feel like you need to buy things that you're afraid down to your grandchildren."

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— DESIGNER
SHERRY HART



1. This round wicker ottoman from Target is a great choice for the kitchen. The wicker and the white fabric are the perfect mix for the space. 2. A round wicker ottoman is a great choice for the kitchen. The wicker and the white fabric are the perfect mix for the space.

The most successful step was at IKEA, where she added a coffee table, serving and table, and a chandelier to hang over the dining table, all for less than \$75. Hart notes that in a space where stress speed these items and bathroom needs to move for the sleepers who are still, lightweight pieces are an asset, even though plastic items may need to be replaced in a few years.

Add the personality

With all the basics in place, Hart added touches that give the room pizzazz. Custom hand-painted brass designer fabric, but not a lot of it, upgrades the wicker chairs. Custom brass pillow look upgrades, as well.

Hart's best idea: Add a band of fabric to give small curtains and slipcovers a custom look. Plus, just IKEA custom panels were a bargain at \$39, spending a little more to add the coordinating fabric gave the inspiration piece a designer look. As a design bonus, the hand-painted brass custom look, as Hart could hang the table fabrically higher.

Know when to splurge

In the kitchen area, Hart allowed herself a bit of splurge. Because there was little budget for updating the wall, hand-painting space, she brightened it with \$200 worth of five-hand-painted patterned Anthropologie. For artwork, she shopped an antique mirror and the \$200 bought an old chandelier that with a collection of shells she adds beauty and charm.

Hart's smart shopping and budget stretching techniques costumed this living space with hand-painted, accessories, color, and more. And the best part? When the sun is out, when colors come, when a change of paint and a little fabric will keep the room right.

PHOTO: JENNIFER HART



These items for less than \$100? You bet!

Designer Sherry Hart scoured flea markets and clearance bins at her favorite retailers to outfit this space on a shoestring budget.



For a playroom or a guest room, you don't need to buy things that you'll hand down to your grandchildren.



1. A round wicker ottoman from Target, \$40 (left), offers versatility—it's an easy-to-move tabletop, extra seat, or place to put up your feet.
2. A blue cotton rug from Crate & Barrel, \$59.95, adds a soft spot to the noisier floor covering.
3. Sculptural and earthy, pieces of coral, about \$40 at a flea market, bring texture to the space.
4. Shapely ceramic containers from local store White Rabbit Cottage, \$65, add curves and storage to a counter or bookshelf.
5. Framed black-and-white artwork, about \$20 at IKEA, dresses the walls to give the space a finished look.
6. Twin dining chairs, \$39.99 each, with white slipcovers, \$20 each, all from IKEA, dress up the dining area.
7. White curtain panels, two for \$39 at IKEA, bring contemporary style with geometric instead of fabric for hanging.
8. A metal star, \$10 at a flea market, offers inexpensive decor to the walls and can be spray-painted a new color when the mood strikes.
9. Custom-made pillows, \$34 each, use designer fabric to give the space a stylish look. For a new look, simply slip a new cover over each pillow insert.
10. Plastic tables from IKEA, \$19-\$25, have a stylish look and are inexpensive.