

DESIGN Intervention

A stylish redesign in Cornelius leads to a serendipitous collaboration—and an international business.

by DEB MITCHELL • *photos by* JUSTIN DRISCOLL





Dixon used this custom console table to disguise a HVAC vent that was visible from the front door.

When interior designer Stephanie Dixon, owner and principle designer at dABBLE Co, a full-service design firm in Huntersville, took on an interior design project for homeowners Josh and Lisa Lippiner, she had no idea she would become a part of creating something that solves problems for other designers and creative professionals.

Josh, a web-based business developer, and Dixon created Wecora, an interactive visual project management tool, when Josh realized she and other designers didn't have an efficient way of collaborating with clients like him about visuals such as product images and room renderings. Now, Wecora is used by thousands of interior designers, graphic designers, photographers—even just parents planning their child's birthday party or kids creating a Christmas wish list—all over the world.

The Lippiners originally sought Dixon's help to resolve aesthetic and functionality issues in the Cornelius home they'd bought in 2007. Built in the Peninsula development in 1992, the home was torn down to the studs just a year before the Lippiners purchased it, but that renovation left much to be desired.

"I used to just try never to look in the dining room," Lisa, a marketing professional, says.

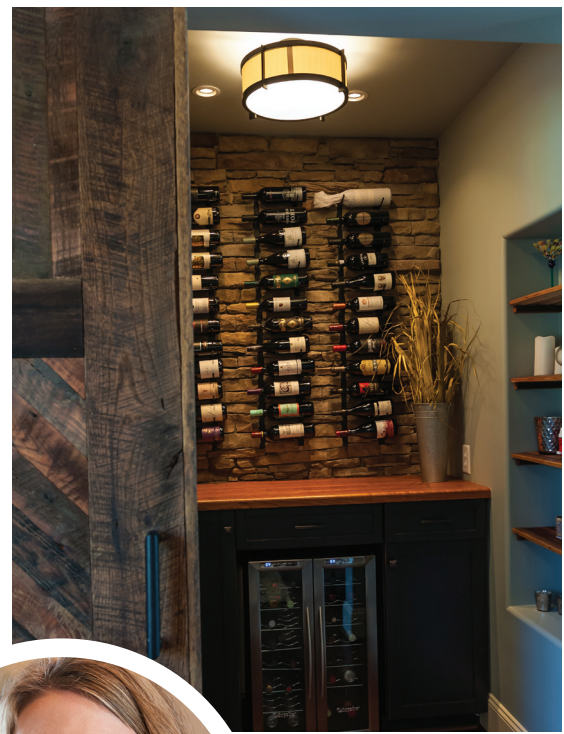
"The whole project was like the book, 'If You Give a Pig a Pancake,'" says Josh (he and Lisa have two daughters, Ellie, 5, and Emma, 7). "We said we wanted to change the light in the dining room, and then it was like, if we do that, the light won't go with the doors; and if we change the doors, they won't go with the trim. We finally said that if we were going to do all that, we may as well just hire a designer!"

When they met Dixon, the Lippiners had already met with several designers. They were even ready to pull the trigger on a plan.

"It was one of those moments in life when you ask yourself, 'Should I tell them the truth?'" Nothing about that plan was right!" says Dixon. She gave them her take on it and the couple, impressed by her candor, hired her on the spot.

One of the first problems Dixon solved was to disguise an HVAC vent in plain view of the front door by placing a console table, custom made to fit the space, in front of it. The large wooden bread bowl Dixon had wired and outfitted with bare bulbs as a foyer light is just one of the many creative touches she gave the home.

That dining room Lisa tried to ignore is now one of the couple's favorite spaces. Dixon created a lounge space there with a laid-back, stylish feel. The white sofa and rug, along with a pair of fun cow



“It was one of those moments in life when you ask yourself, ‘Should I tell them the truth?’ Nothing about that plan was right!”

—STEPHANIE DIXON, DESIGNER





print chairs are sophisticated but don't take themselves too seriously. Dixon even had the coffee table built at desk height so Josh, who works from home, can type comfortably while on the sofa. "I'm in here all the time!" he says.

Dixon turned an extraneous kitchenette off the dining room into two much-used rooms: a wine room on the dining room side and a mud room behind accessed by the back hallway.

Dixon, herself a mom of two, solved the 'crumbs in the sofa' problem: She had a sofa table built so barstools could tuck underneath when not in use. Now the girls can snack while watching TV and still keep the mess away from rugs and upholstery.

Throughout, Dixon repeated earthy elements for cohesiveness. The barn door made from reclaimed factory beams, columns and ceiling beams made from hand-hewn oak, brick veneer walls and ceilings, and metal barn lights were mixed with sleek touches, such as glass 'bubble' chandeliers and a steely gray paint palette to create a warm, 'modern rustic' style.

Thanks to their serendipitous meeting, the Lippiners now have a beautiful home they enjoy every day, and more than 1,400 creative professionals like Dixon have a tool that helps them collaborate with their clients more efficiently, leaving them more time to enjoy their lives. **LNM**



Dixon had a bread bowl wired and outfitted with bare bulbs for the foyer light.