

Charlotte

BEST OF GUIDE 2017

HOME

DESIGN & DECOR®





B R A D
L I T T L E



OPENING UP

“**T**ear down this wall!” President Reagan exclaimed during his 1987 speech in West Berlin. He, of course, was referring to the Berlin Wall and his message was

directed to Mikhail Gorbachev. Today, our design team is frequently repeating Reagan’s words, developing projects and plans that feature the removal of walls. Prior to the ’90s, it was still fashionable in residential design to split up public areas with walls, creating the illusion of a larger home with a higher room count. But home design and the way we live have evolved over the last 25 years. Kitchens have become a “living room” and the public areas that surround it are an extension of this hub of activity.

I’m a big fan of open floor plans and all the benefits they offer, but I realize they’re not for everyone. Whenever I walk into a kitchen that has four walls, I’m immediately checking out opportunities

for removal of at least one or two of them. I’ve generated a list of real-world examples to give you an idea of the benefits of opening up your home:

That dining room you rarely use
Having a closed-off formal dining space is great for dinner parties and holiday gatherings, but older homes with smaller kitchens can benefit from more elbow room.

The kids or guests you can’t see when you’re in the kitchen
Whether you’re entertaining or just getting through your daily meal routines with your kids, a kitchen with four walls has only enough room for one or two people. Removing a wall between the kitchen and living room keeps everyone within view.

The large island you’ve dreamed about
Removing a kitchen wall often creates an opportunity to feature a large, multipurpose island that becomes a place for everyone to hang out.

Removing that dark feeling
Depending on how your house is situated





and how the trees around you filter the sun, rooms that feel dark can lighten up once a wall or two is removed, allowing more natural light to flood in.

Often, homeowners run into the question of whether or not the wall coming down is a load-bearing wall. If that is the case, a structural engineer needs to be consulted to design a plan to redistribute the load using engineered lumber or steel beams. Many times it means adding supplemental support to the foundation or the walls below as well. It sounds painful and costly, but in most cases the resulting improvements to a home's design are well worth the effort.

Sometimes it may be difficult to imagine how a space will look and feel with an open floor plan. What about furniture placement? What about acoustics? What about traffic patterns?



These are all valid questions that an experienced designer can help answer. All you need to do is be “open” to the possibilities!◆

Brad Little is the president of Case Design/Remodeling of Charlotte and has been leading a team of award winning designers and craftsmen since 2005. To view more of their projects and schedule a free consultation visit www.CaseCharlotte.com or call 704-759-3920.