DI LEO DESIGNS

INTERIOR STUDIO



The Lake House Reset

Luxury Lake Living Edition

The Designer's Guide to Creating a Home You'll Never Want to Leave

A Note From Cathy

Welcome to the Lake House Reset

A lake home is more than a place—it becomes the backdrop for life's most meaningful moments. It's where grandchildren learn to fish, friends gather on the dock, families linger over dinner long after the sun goes down, and memories are made year after year.

As a fourth-generation family member at the Lake of the Ozarks, I've spent my life experiencing lake living through every season—from childhood summers and young adulthood to raising my own family here and now helping care for aging loved ones. Each chapter has shown me how differently we use our spaces—and how the best lake homes evolve to support every generation.

That perspective shapes the way I design.

A well-designed lake house isn't just beautiful. It welcomes guests effortlessly, functions for busy weekends and quiet mornings alike, creates opportunities for gathering, and remains comfortable, practical, and accessible for everyone who walks through the door.

I created this guide to help you see your home through the same lens I use during a professional design consultation. As you move through each section, you'll discover what's working well, uncover opportunities you may not have noticed, and identify the improvements that will have the greatest impact on how your home looks, functions, and feels.

Whether you're planning a simple refresh or a complete transformation, my hope is that this guide helps you create a lake home that feels effortless to live in and unforgettable to share.

I'm so glad you're here.

Cathy Di Leo
Founder & Principal Designer Di Leo Designs Interior Studio





"Beautiful lake homes aren't created by buying more. They're created by making intentional decisions that support the way you gather, relax, and live."

— Cathy Di Leo

Contents

Welcome

Your Lake House Reset Journey

See Your Lake House Through a Designer's Eyes

The Five Principles of a Great Lake House

Room-by-Room Assessments

- Living Room
- Kitchen & Dining
- Primary Bedroom
- Guest Bedroom
- Outdoor Living

The Dock Experience

Your Results & Action Plan

Lake House Reset Results

Personalized Lake House Action Plan

The Di Leo Design Philosophy

Your Next Chapter Begins Here

See Your Lake House Through a Designer's Eyes

Most lake houses weren't originally designed for the way families use them today.

Over the years, rooms evolve one purchase at a time—new furniture is added, accessories accumulate, and spaces begin serving multiple purposes. Before long, the home still functions, but it no longer feels intentional.

The goal of this guide isn't to encourage a complete renovation.
It's to help you recognize the opportunities that already exist within your home.

By stepping back and evaluating each space through a designer's perspective, you'll begin to identify what supports the way you want to live—and what quietly works against it.

Throughout this guide, ask yourself:
- Does this room feel welcoming the moment I walk in?
- Is the furniture arranged for conversation and connection?
- Can guests move comfortably through the space?
- Does the room support both everyday living and entertaining?
- Would someone visiting for the first time immediately know how to use the space?
- Does this room feel calm, collected, and effortless—or simply full?

Remember...
Great lake homes aren't defined by expensive furniture.
They're remembered because they feel comfortable, welcoming, beautifully layered, and easy to enjoy.
That's what we're measuring throughout this reset.

"The best lake homes aren't the most expensive. They're the ones everyone wants to gather in."



The 5 Principals of a Great Lake House

Beautiful lake homes aren't created by following trends. They're created by designing spaces that support the way people gather, relax, entertain, and make memories together. As you move through this assessment, evaluate each room using these five principles.

Function Before Furniture

Every room should make daily life easier.
Furniture should support conversation, movement, relaxation, and entertaining—not simply fill empty space.
Ask yourself:
"Does this room work as beautifully as it looks?"

Comfortable Gathering

The best lake homes naturally bring people together.
Whether it's morning coffee, card games, family dinners, or evenings on the porch, every space should invite connection.
Ask yourself:
"Would people naturally want to stay here?"

Visual Simplicity

Luxury rarely feels crowded.
A thoughtfully edited room feels calmer, larger, and more intentional than one filled with too many pieces.
Ask yourself:
"Could this room benefit from doing less?"

Indoor Outdoor Connection

One of the greatest features of lake living is the relationship between the home and the water.
Your interiors should naturally encourage movement outdoors while bringing the beauty of the lake inside.
Ask yourself:
"Does this room celebrate where we are?"

Designed for Every Generation

The most memorable lake homes welcome everyone and makes every generation feel comfortable
Children, Teenagers, Friends, Grandparents and Weekend guests
Ask yourself:
"Can everyone enjoy this space with ease?"

"WHEN THESE FIVE PRINCIPLES COME TOGETHER, A LAKE HOUSE BECOMES MORE THAN BEAUTIFUL—IT BECOMES UNFORGETTABLE."



Living Room Assessment

The living room is often the heart of a lake home. It's where mornings begin, afternoons slow down, and evenings naturally gather. Evaluate your space using the questions below.

Rate each statement from 1–5

1 = Needs Significant Improvement

3 = Adequate

5 = Excellent

Layout & Flow

☐ Seating encourages conversation rather than focusing only on the television.

☐ Guests can move comfortably through the room without obstacles.

☐ Furniture feels appropriately scaled for the size of the space.

Score: ____ /15

Comfort

☐ Seating is comfortable enough for long conversations, movie nights, and family gatherings.

☐ There are enough seats for the people who regularly use the home.

☐ The room feels welcoming rather than formal.

Score: ____ /15

Functionality

☐ Lighting supports daytime and evening activities.

☐ Side tables and surfaces are available where people naturally need them.

☐ Storage keeps everyday items organized and out of sight.

Score: ____ /15

Design

☐ Colors, textures, and furnishings feel cohesive.

☐ The room feels thoughtfully edited—not cluttered or unfinished.

☐ The space reflects the relaxed character of lake living.

Score: ____ /15

Designer's Reflection

Instead of focusing on what you don't like...

Ask yourself:

What is one change that would make the biggest difference in how this room feels?

Total Living Room Score

_____ / 60



Dining & Kitchen Assessment

The kitchen is where meals are prepared, but the dining area is where memories are made. Together, these spaces should support everything from quick breakfasts to holiday gatherings.

Rate each statement from 1–5

1 = Needs Significant Improvement

3 = Adequate

5 = Excellent

Layout & Flow

☐ The kitchen layout allows multiple people to comfortably cook, gather, and move through the space.

☐ The dining area comfortably accommodates the number of people who typically gather at the lake.

☐ Traffic flows naturally between the kitchen, dining, and outdoor entertaining areas.

Score: ____ /15

Comfort & Gathering

☐ The dining space encourages guests to linger after meals.

☐ Seating is comfortable for long conversations, games, and family gatherings.

☐ The space feels welcoming whether hosting two people or twelve.

Score: ____ /15

Functionality

☐ Storage is organized and easy to access for everyday living and entertaining.

☐ Countertops provide adequate workspace for food preparation and serving.

☐ Everyday essentials are convenient without creating visual clutter.

Score: ____ /15

Design

☐ Finishes, lighting, and materials feel cohesive with the rest of the home.

☐ Decorative accessories are thoughtfully edited and enhance rather than overwhelm the space.

☐ The room reflects the relaxed, welcoming character of lake living.

Score: ____ /15

Total Living Room Score

_____ / 60

Designer's Reflection

IWhat's one improvement that would make your kitchen or dining space feel

more inviting for family and friends?



Primary Bedroom Assessment

Your primary bedroom should feel like a private retreat—a place to unwind, recharge, and begin each day feeling refreshed. Evaluate how well your space supports rest, comfort, and relaxation.

Rate each statement from 1–5

1 = Needs Significant Improvement

3 = Adequate

5 = Excellent

Comfort & Layout

☐ The furniture layout feels balanced and allows for easy movement throughout the room.

☐ The bed is appropriately scaled for the room and serves as the natural focal point.

☐ Nightstands and surrounding furnishings provide both function and visual balance.

Score: ____ /15

Rest & Function

☐ Lighting supports both relaxation and practical tasks such as reading.

☐ Window treatments provide privacy while helping create a restful environment.

☐ The room feels peaceful and free from unnecessary distractions or clutter.

Score: ____ /15

Storage & Organization

☐ Clothing, accessories, and personal items have designated storage.

☐ Surfaces remain organized without feeling crowded.

☐ The room feels calm because everything has a place.

Score: ____ /15

Design

☐ Colors, textures, and materials create a relaxing atmosphere.

☐ Bedding, artwork, and accessories feel layered and cohesive.

☐ The room reflects the peaceful feeling you want to experience at the end of the day.

Score: ____ /15

Designer's Reflection

IWhat's one improvement that would make your kitchen or dining space feel more inviting for family and friends?

Total Living Room Score

_____ / 60



Guest Bedroom Assessment

A thoughtfully designed guest room makes family and friends feel welcomed from the moment they arrive. Evaluate how well your guest spaces balance comfort, function, and hospitality.

Rate each statement from 1–5

1 = Needs Significant Improvement

3 = Adequate

5 = Excellent

Comfort & Layout

☐ The room provides enough space for guests to move around comfortably.

☐ Furniture is appropriately scaled and arranged for both comfort and functionality.

☐ The mattress, pillows, and bedding provide a comfortable night's sleep.

Score: ____ /15

Functionality

☐ Guests have convenient surfaces for personal items such as luggage, phones, books, or beverages.

☐ There is adequate closet space, hanging storage, or luggage accommodation.

☐ Lighting allows guests to comfortably read, relax, and prepare for the day.

Score: ____ /15

Hospitality

☐ The room feels welcoming and thoughtfully prepared for overnight guests.

☐ Window treatments provide privacy while allowing natural light during the day.

☐ Guests have easy access to essentials such as extra blankets, towels, or charging outlets.

Score: ____ /15

Design

☐ Colors, furnishings, and décor create a relaxing and inviting atmosphere.

☐ The room feels cohesive with the overall design of the home.

☐ The space feels intentionally designed rather than serving as a catch-all room.

Score: ____ /15

Designer's Reflection

What's one improvement that would make your bedroom feel more like a relaxing retreat?

Total Living Room Score

_____ / 60



Outdoor Living Assessment

At the lake, some of life's best moments happen outdoors. Your exterior spaces should feel like an extension of your home—comfortable, inviting, and designed for gathering, relaxing, and enjoying the view.

Rate each statement from 1–5

1 = Needs Significant Improvement

3 = Adequate

5 = Excellent

Comfort & Layout

☐ Outdoor seating is arranged to encourage conversation and take advantage of the best views.

☐ There is enough comfortable seating for the people who regularly gather.

☐ Furniture placement allows guests to move easily throughout the space.

Score: ____ /15

Functionality

☐ The space supports multiple activities such as dining, relaxing, reading, or entertaining.

☐ Shade, lighting, and weather protection allow the space to be enjoyed throughout the day.

☐ Outdoor essentials are organized and easily accessible without creating clutter.

Score: ____ /15

Atmosphere

☐ Landscaping, planters, or natural elements enhance the outdoor experience.

☐ The space feels welcoming and encourages family and friends to spend time outside.

☐ The outdoor areas feel connected to the interior of the home.

Score: ____ /15

Design

☐ Furniture, lighting, and accessories create a cohesive outdoor living space.

☐ Materials and finishes complement the home's overall style.

☐ The space feels thoughtfully designed rather than simply furnished.

Score: ____ /15ntentionally designed rather than serving as a catch-all room.

Score: ____ /15

Designer's Reflection

What's one improvement that would encourage you or your guests to spend more time outdoors?

Total Living Room Score

_____ / 60



Dock & Lakefront Assessment

Your dock isn't just where you park the boat—it's where lake life happens. Whether you're enjoying morning coffee, afternoon swims, sunset cocktails, or welcoming friends, your waterfront should be as thoughtfully designed as the rooms inside your home.

Rate each statement from 1–5

1 = Needs Significant Improvement

3 = Adequate

5 = Excellent

Comfort & Layout

☐ Seating areas encourage guests to relax and enjoy the lake.

☐ The dock feels spacious, organized, and easy to move around safely.

☐ Furniture placement maximizes both conversation and lake views.

Score: ____ /15

Functionality

☐ Lake toys, towels, life jackets, and supplies have organized storage.

☐ The dock is easy to access from the home and supports everyday lake activities.

☐ The space is equipped for entertaining, relaxing, or enjoying quiet moments on the water.

Score: ____ /15

Hospitality

☐ Guests immediately know where to gather and feel welcome on the dock.

☐ Shade, umbrellas, or covered areas provide comfort throughout the day.

☐ The dock feels inviting from morning coffee through sunset.

Score: ____ /15

Design

☐ Furnishings, planters, and accessories create a cohesive waterfront experience.

☐ The dock feels intentionally designed rather than simply functional.

☐ The lakefront reflects the relaxed lifestyle and personality of your home.

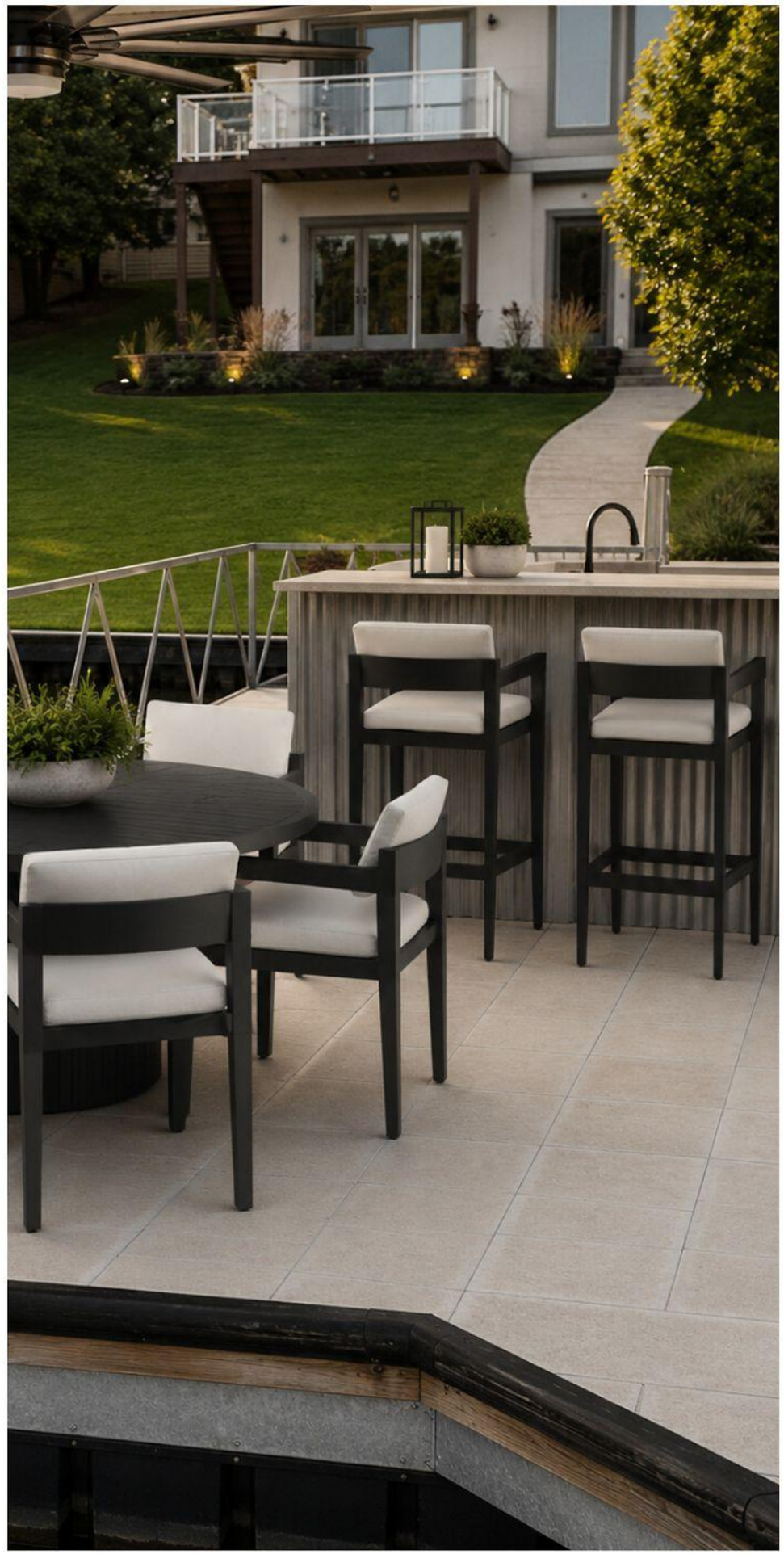
Score: ____ /15

Total Living Room Score

_____ / 60

Designer's Reflection

What's one improvement that would make your dock or lakefront your favorite place to spend time?



Your Lake House Reset Results

Add your room scores below to discover how your home is performing today—and where thoughtful improvements can make the greatest impact.

Total Your Scores
Living Room _____ /60
Kitchen & Dining _____ /60
Primary Bedroom _____ /60
Guest Bedroom _____ /60
Outdoor Living _____ /60
Dock Experience _____ /60

Your Total Score

_____ /360



Find Your Lake House Profile

300–360
The Luxury Escape
Your home already reflects thoughtful design and intentional living.
Continue refining details, layering texture, and investing in meaningful upgrades that enhance the experience for family and guests.

240–299
The Elevated Retreat
Your home has a strong foundation.
With a few strategic improvements, you can dramatically elevate both functionality and comfort while creating a more cohesive design throughout.

180–239
The Weekend Gathering Place
Your lake house is full of potential.
Focus on improving layout, comfort, lighting, and gathering spaces to create a home that feels as welcoming as it is beautiful.

Below 180
Ready for a Reset
Your assessment highlights exciting opportunities to reimagine how your home functions and feels.
Prioritizing a few key improvements can completely transform the experience of living and entertaining at the lake.

Reflection

Which three spaces would make the biggest difference if they were transformed?



Your Personalized Lake House Action Plan

Small, intentional improvements often create the biggest transformation. Use this page to organize your ideas and prioritize the changes that will have the greatest impact on how your home looks, feels, and functions.

"Beautiful homes aren't created in a weekend. They're created one thoughtful decision at a time."

Priority One

Complete First

What is the single improvement that would make the biggest difference?

Priority Two

Complete Next

What project would improve the way you gather, entertain, or relax?

Priority Three

Future Investment

What larger project would you love to complete over the next one to three years?

My Lake House Vision

When my Lake House Reset is complete, I want my home to feel...

My Favorite Space

Which room are you most excited to transform?

The Di Leo Design Philosophy

Beautiful homes aren't created by following trends. They're created through thoughtful decisions that support the way you want to live.



Design for Living

Before choosing furniture or finishes, decide how you want your home to feel. The best interiors begin with purpose, not products.

Comfort Is Luxury

A beautiful room should invite people to stay. Prioritize comfort, conversation, and connection over perfection.

Less Creates More

Luxury doesn't come from adding more—it comes from editing well. Leave room for architecture, natural light, and meaningful pieces to stand out.

Let the Lake Lead

Your greatest design feature isn't inside the home—it's outside the window. Arrange your spaces to celebrate the views and create a seamless connection to nature.

Invest Where Life Happens

Spend your budget on the pieces you use every day: a comfortable sofa, quality dining chairs, restful bedding, and welcoming outdoor seating. Those investments shape the way your home feels for years to come.

"A well-designed lake house isn't about impressing your guests. It's about creating a place they never want to leave."
— Cathy Di Leo

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Continue Your Lake House Reset

The Complete Lake House Reset takes you beyond the assessment and into the decisions that shape the entire home—from architecture, flow and materials to kitchens, gathering spaces, bedrooms, outdoor living and the connection between the house and the water.

You don't need more options.
You need a clearer point of view.

GET THE COMPLETE
LAKE HOUSE RESET — $125

Planning a Larger Project?

If you're renovating, furnishing or rethinking your lake house and would rather have professional guidance, let's talk about your project.

SCHEDULE A COMPLIMENTARY 30-MINUTE DESIGN DISCOVERY CALL

Your Next Chapter Begins Here

You've looked at your lake house through a designer's eyes. You've identified the spaces that need attention and begun to see where thoughtful changes could make the greatest difference.

Now it's time to decide what comes first.

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Thank You!

I hope this guide helped you see your lake house a little differently. Beautiful homes aren't created overnight. They evolve through thoughtful decisions, meaningful details, and spaces designed around the people who gather there.

Whether your next step is refreshing a single room or planning a complete transformation, I hope this guide inspires you to create a home that feels welcoming, timeless, and uniquely yours.

I'd be honored to be part of that journey.

Most lake houses aren't designed. They're accumulated. Your reset begins by deciding what belongs—and what comes next.

— Cathy Di Leo
Di Leo Designs Interior Studio

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