Vacasa launches interior design service for rental owners

Vacation rental startup Vacasa announced today that it is launching a multi-tiered interior design service across the U.S. for people who rent out their properties to travelers.

Vacasa Interior Design is meant to give property owners an affordable, tech-enabled decorating experience that the company believes will boost both occupancy and revenue at rental properties.

Kimberly White, the company's head of interior design services, told Inman that the program has three different service tiers, which are flexible enough to accommodate everyone from DIYers to property owners looking for a full service experience.

Kimberly White

"The point is for the homeowners to have a better business product," White said.

The least expensive tier costs U.S. $199 and is meant to give property owners design ideas, which they then implement on their own. White said the process typically begins with phone calls between the property owner and Vacasa's design team.

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After determining the owner's aesthetic preferences, the designers come up with ideas and share staging tips and tricks. Designers will collaborate with property owners for up to two weeks at the entry-level tier.

The second tier costs between $499 and $899. It includes specific design plans for each room in a property, as well as shipping coordination for decorations and other items the homeowner may purchase. Vacasa will work with property owners in the middle tier for up to three weeks.

The final tier costs between $599 and $1,119 and offers a more full-service approach. At this level, White said, Vacasa designers will help property owners choose everything in a rental unit from the "pizza cutter to the shower curtains to the sofa to the art." This final tier also involves a total of three weeks of work.

According to White, the prices for all the tiers are significantly cheaper than other interior design services, which can run around $100 per hour just for guidance and input. She added that Vacasa's goal was to keep the service "very approachable and accessible."

The fees do not include décor, furnishings and other items property owners may end up purchasing, nor do they include staging costs or third-party contractor work.

Vacasa currently has partnerships with décor vendors such as Wayfair, which allows the company to secure discounts. White said those discounts are passed along to Vacasa customers and her company does not currently collect commissions or other profit from items owners may buy during the design process.

A Vacasa-designed room in an Oregon rental property | Credit: Vacasa

The program also is designed to work with both individual property owners, as well as developers who want “to customize the look and feel of multifamily units, from concept creation, to sourcing, ordering, delivery, installation and photography,” according to a statement from Vacasa.

Vacasa was founded in 2009, and has grown rapidly ever since. Today, the company manages more than 13,000 vacation rental properties spread out across multiple countries. The company has raised nearly $170 million over multiple funding rounds in recent years, and last October became the largest vacation rental company in North America.

Vacasa’s properties are typically owned by individual landlords who contract with the company to handle marketing, booking, and other services. Travelers can reserve the units either directly through Vacasa’s website, or through third party companies such as Airbnb.

White said that Vacasa began formally putting together an interior design plan about a year ago. Today, the company's team is made up of five designers, including White, with plans to expand in the future.

"We're poised to just grow exponentially from here," White added.

Though the team is small right now, White said that it relies on technology to streamline the design process. Most significantly, each property that Vacasa's interior design team works on will be scanned using Matterport's 3D modeling technology. The team then uses those scans and resulting "dollhouse" view — essentially, a three dimensional digital model of an interior space — to come up with designs.

"We can do all of our design work from Portland, digitally without having to do several site visits," White said.

(White also said that most Vacasa properties are already subject to Matterport's 3D scans, meaning the digital models the design team uses for each unit likely already exist.)

A living room designed by Vacasa | Credit: Vacasa

While the new design program is only now officially launching across the U.S., Vacasa has already tested it in a pilot stage with about 60 homeowners, White said. The results so far have been promising; according to a company statement the program “has maximized rental occupancy by an average of 12 percent, with some homeowners experiencing a revenue boost of more than 20 percent.”

White added that interior design can be especially useful for helping properties stand out when conditions become more competitive.

“The benefit of interior design,” she added, “is that in an off season your home is going to be the first to be booked.”

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