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Home staging is an art form, and finding an artist who truly understands that art form is a requirement in today's home market. These artists look at a house, beautiful in itself, and then help all comers see the home that could blossom even further. Leia T. Ward, principal staging designer of her company, LTW Design, is just such an artist. "When I preview a home prior to a staging," she says, discussing her design philosophy, "I think of the buyers and what lifestyle they are aspiring to have, if they were to purchase the home." She researches buyer demographics, then crafts a staged interior that speaks to their desires—all while allowing the house to show her what it wants to be. "I always have an instinct for the exact

style and mood the staging needs to convey," Leia notes. She identifies the bones—or key features—of a home, such as architectural details, focal points and superb views. "A staging should never compete with the bones of the home," she says. "Instead, it should highlight them."

Leia was brought on by David & Holly Hawes of Halstead Realty to stage this luxury home in Darien, CT, built on spec by Doherty & DeLeo Development. This fabulous residence sported smart technology, four floors, an elevator, an outdoor kitchen and pool—and so much more. Beyond these amenities, the house sang architecturally with an open layout, French doors, lovely moldings, a two-story foyer and, again, so much more! "They were looking for a stager who could create a design that supported and featured all the work that was put into

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the details," Leia points out. The home, she adds, "is located around the corner from the water, has excellent schools and is an easy commute to NYC." It was even featured as one of the top four homes of Darien and Greenwich for the Luxury Home Tour 2017.

Leia put her expertise to work, filling the fabulous house with just the right selection of furnishings to tempt a buyer without hiding any of the home's stunning details. The large space immediately made her think it might be filled by a large family, with all the bustle and fuss that entails. "This house being so close to the water immediately evoked a feeling of calm," she reflects. "I wanted the buyers to walk through the door and feel at ease, relaxed, at home. I think a casually sophisticated design with clean lines with soft accents of blue would create an appealing environment for this buyer demographic." Neutral tones, cozy textures and clusters of furniture gracefully showcase the home's potential. She chose to stage one uniquely shaped room offering built-in bookshelves, a