



A Guide to Custom Home Planning

The following home planning tips are for those individuals who are planning to build a new home or are remodeling but aren't quite sure where to start. Remember, ***A Great Home Begins with A Great Home Plan***. The following tips will give you some ideas that should make your planning process much easier, and have proven to be very effective for many of Brittany Lea Designs' customers.

THERE ARE THREE BASIC STEPS TO CREATING A HOUSE PLAN:

- 1.) Create a floor plan. The floor plan defines the function of your home.
- 2.) Choose a style. Style defines the personality of your home.
- 3.) Determine what materials to use. Materials define the quality of your home.

NOTE: SITE CONSIDERATIONS

A major consideration in planning your home is the site you build on. The shape and slope of your lot and your desired views can affect how you arrange your rooms. Taking advantage of site conditions will result in a much better plan. It is always best to secure the lot before planning your home. ***Always plan your home to suit your lot!*** There are many cases where someone planned a home, then purchased a lot, only to discover the house would not fit/work on the lot.

Review the lot and covenants. Most subdivision lots have covenants, conditions and restrictions that regulate building area, square footage, exterior finish, roofing type and even maximum building height in some areas where views cannot be blocked. You will also have to abide by building setbacks and zoning requirements for the jurisdiction that you are building in.

GETTING STARTED

Create a wish list. Make a detailed room-by-room list, noting any particular items that you want each room to have – i.e. a whirlpool tub in the master bath, central vacuum system, location of television, etc. Consider everything: One or Two-Story Home, Basement, Ceiling height, Fireplace, Roofing, Windows, Doors, Exterior Finishes, Electrical Wiring, Plumbing Fixtures, Security, Home Theater, Computer Networking, HVAC, Cabinetry, Flooring, Appliances. Your wish list will be an excellent resource when you later work with a builder. A three-ring binder is a good way to keep all of your home ideas organized and in one place. If you are high tech, creating files in Pinterest and Houzz is also a good idea.



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Measure rooms to help you visualize your new plan. Many people have a hard time visualizing room sizes and what will meet their needs. Measure rooms in your current house or apartment, or even in a friend's home that has room sizes that you like. The more thorough you are the easier it makes Brittany Lea Designs' job of understanding your particular needs in creating a custom plan that works best for you.

FINDING PLAN COMPONENTS

Start small – look for “parts”. The trick to avoiding frustration and burnout when finding the perfect plan is to find parts of plans that appeal to you. For example, look for kitchen layouts that are close to what you want. Don't worry if you don't like the rest of the plan. Just circle what you want. Next, do the same thing for your living areas, bathrooms, etc. Don't worry about the exterior style of the house, that will be covered later. For now, concentrate on the floor plan only. At this point a file folder or binder will help keep your plan ideas from getting lost. If you do happen to find a plan that works for you, with little to no revisions, consider yourself lucky!

CREATING THE FLOOR PLAN

Draw a bubble diagram. Draw a circle and label it with a room name. Now draw another circle next to it with the room you want there, and so on until you have a rough concept of the room arrangement. Don't worry about walls and fixtures at this point – only the overall layout.

OR

Create a jigsaw puzzle. Photocopy plans or parts of plans and cut out the rooms you like. Then put them together like a jigsaw puzzle until you have a layout that looks good to you. Don't worry if the windows or doors are in the wrong location, odd room sizes or getting too elaborate – leave that to Brittany Lea Designs we will put your idea into a schematic plan.

OR

Create a sketch. Start with graph paper and start laying out the plan yourself. Not everyone feels comfortable doing this but if you have the ability to draw your own rough plan, go for it.

CHOOSING AN EXTERIOR STYLE

Find an exterior style you like. Look through plan books and magazines for pictures or illustrations that match the exterior you envision for your home. Or, you can also take pictures of houses to capture the exterior details that you like.



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BUDGET CONSIDERATIONS

□ **A major factor in custom plans for most individuals is budget.** A problem that many people run into when they plan a home is that it is way out of their price range. It is a good idea to talk with a reputable builder(s) to determine current square foot cost, before planning your home. This cost information will help you to determine what size house is in your price range.

○ Remember the more elaborate your plan, the higher the price will be. For example, multiple corners and different ceiling heights usually add character but can also create complexity from the roof all the way down to the foundation.

○ Remember two-story homes are generally less expensive than single story houses because they have less foundation and roof areas.

○ Keep overall dimensions as even as possible to result in less waste since sheet goods typically come in two- or four-foot increments and dimensional lumber in even foot lengths.

□ **Review and research costs on your wish list.** You may want to start pricing specific items such as whirlpool tubs, tiling, lighting fixtures, etc. You will find that in many cases comparable items can vary widely. It's not the big construction items such as framing your home that add to the cost your home; it's the small details. It's important to understand the cost of products so you can avoid sticker shock.

PLAN BOOK VS. CUSTOM HOME PLANNING

□ **Purchasing stock plans may be costly if they need revisions.** Some people purchase plans from a book in order to save money. By doing this, your plans may require revisions to suit your lot, meet your requirements and specifications. You may be paying more for the plan and revisions, than if you had just started with a custom home plan draftsman. In addition, some plans tend to have gray areas that may not meet building code requirements.

SUMMARY

□ **Planning and building a home is an exciting adventure.** It's like going on a trip to an unknown location. Before you go on a trip, you review your road map and plan the most "efficient route" to your desired destination. Your house plan is your "efficient route" to the successful completion of your new home.

□ **Design/build experience creates savings for you.** As an experienced design/builder with over 25 years of construction experience, Brittany Lea Designs will draft your plans to create an aesthetically pleasing home, while making the most cost-effective use of materials and labor. We look forward to working with you to plan your new dream home.