

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT DESIGNING A HOME.**

After numerous interviews over the years with prospective clients, we have become aware of a trend in the questions. The following is our approach to responding to your concerns and interests. These are legitimate questions and deserve thoughtful answers. Having read this prior to our initial interview enables our time spent in the interview to focus more on items particular to your project.

### **1. We have purchased a site specifically for the views and special trees. Do you consider this in your designs?**

Nothing can minimize the effectiveness of a well designed home more significantly than poor site planning. Our Designers orient your home on the building site with careful attention to the sun, tree location, drive approach, views and curb appeal. We are careful to design with the terrain in mind to achieve the most cost-effective building site. The views from your home are perhaps the most important of design considerations for most home sites. This is most often why you purchased your site. A site visit is imperative for satisfying this design demand. The approach to your house can create interest and provide an early, impressive perspective of your home that reveals its most attractive features early on.

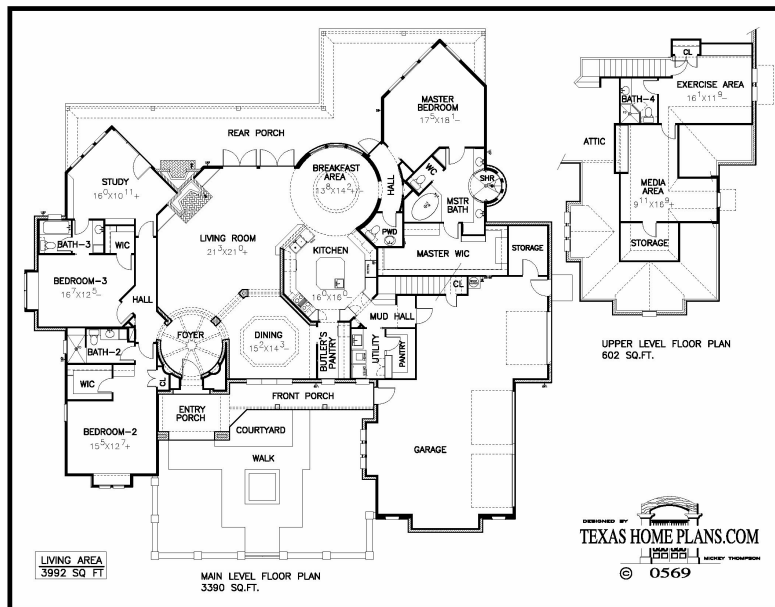


## 2. How are floor plans developed?

Developing an outstanding floor plan is the product of years of experience in design, structural inspection, critiquing and reviewing plans and physical structures. Our Design professionals are gifted with perceiving three dimensional spatial relationships and visualization of the finished product. The greater the designer's structural experience, the more freedom to create. Developing a floor plan involves the integration (or sculpturing) of the roof plan, elevations and site requirements. Our experienced Design team will create an innovative floor plan that flows with your lifestyle.

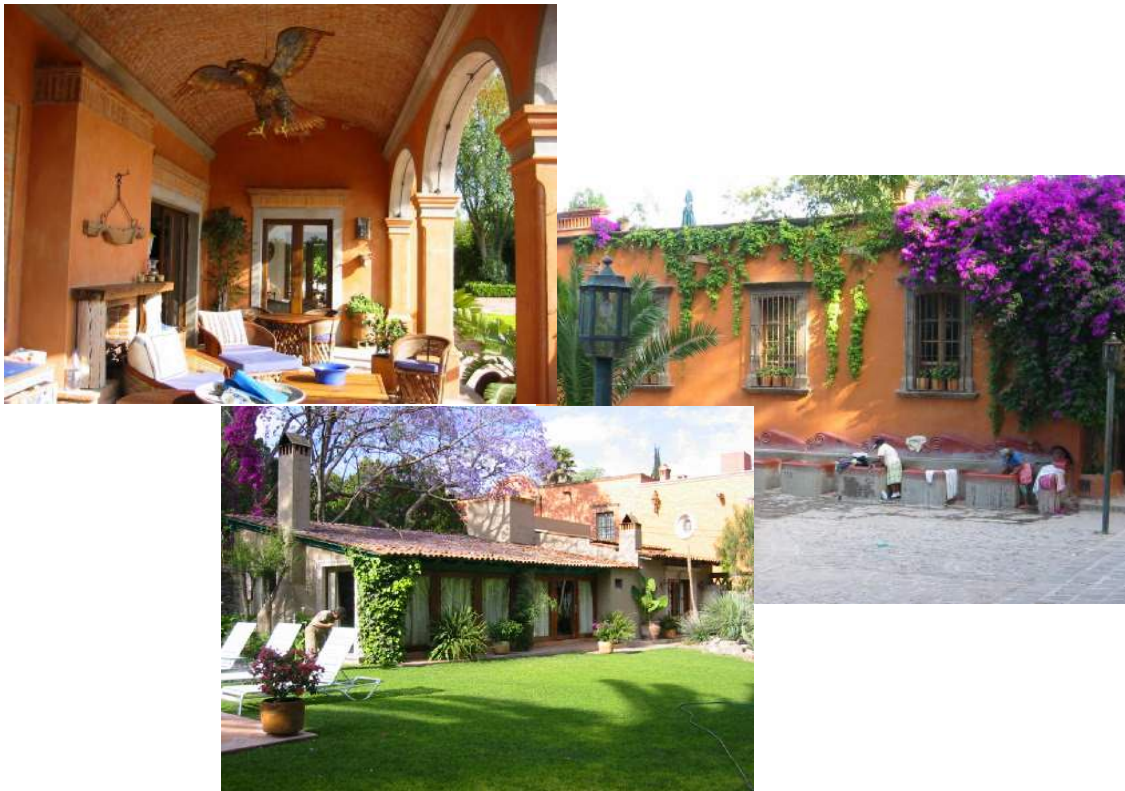
We have developed fairly sophisticated questionnaires. From these questionnaires and "intake" information that you will provide us, we develop your floor plan. We can work from whatever information you wish to furnish... word descriptions (specific or general), sketches and/or pictures, but these questionnaires have proven to be most helpful to our clients and our firm.

Awareness of efficient and innovative flow pursuant to lifestyle types is fundamental, but listening to the client is paramount. Designing a floor plan is much like sculpting in that one must keep in mind the roof shape, the elevation concept and the interior shapes and space. We like integrating shapes, angles, octagons and circles to create an interesting home; however, in our effort to be sensitive to the client and Builder we are very aware that angles of perimeter walls are more expensive to design.



### 3. What is your favorite style of architecture?

Many clients ask us “what is your favorite design style?” hoping it will correspond with that of their dream home. We would be less than honest if we followed their lead. It is our belief that a professional artist designing custom homes would not necessarily have a favorite style. A seasoned artist in this design industry appreciates a multitude of styles and is cautious of being limited to any one or a few. A design professional should develop and continue developing a repertoire of design elements for a myriad of styles and be ready and eager to study and explore new styles when a client so requests. He should hone his artistic skills to optimize the sculpturing and blending of spatial relationships, proportions, texture, appointments and materials. While style should not define one’s designs, each designer usually has a major underlying influencing bent or thrust. For example we will admit that our thrust is the “Old World” feel adapted to the many Texas styles. While we enjoy and appreciate clean contemporary lines and elements, our preference is to create homes that appear to have been here for some time even if we develop contemporary lines. Patina with age seems to have a romantic charm for some reason. Materials, finishes and appointments that resemble construction of ages past help produce this charm.

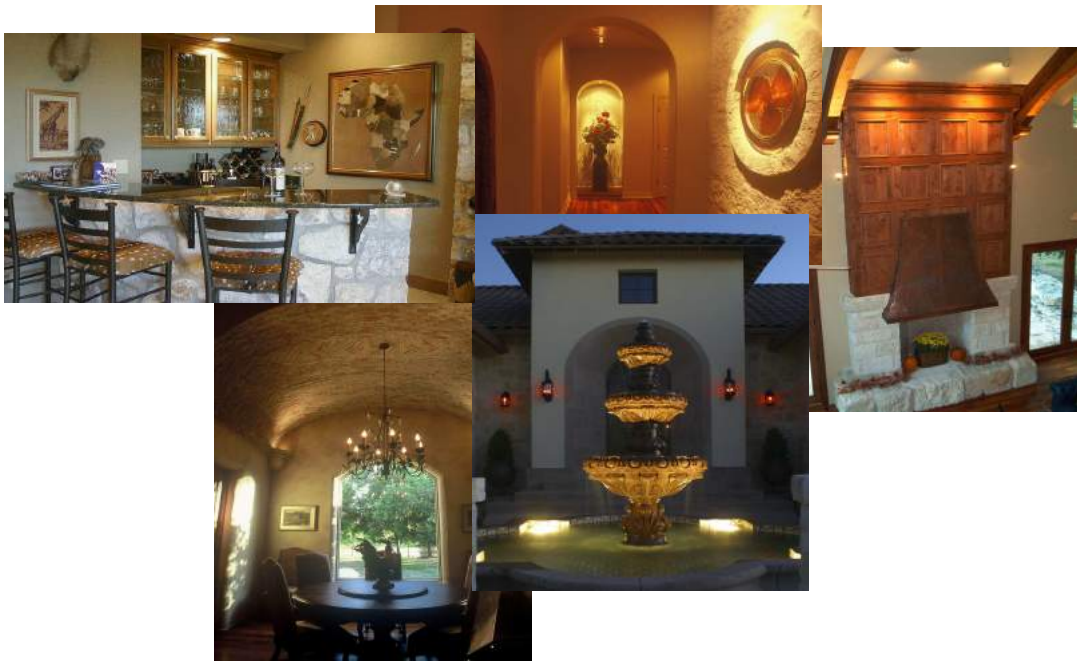


#### 4. Can your firm satisfy our lighting and electrical desires?

We feel lighting is as much a part of architecture as the physical structure. We love lighting! It is the life of architecture. It's the sparkle, pizzazz and essence of your home. Lighting accentuates texture, it highlights color and emphasizes special appointments. Lighting is designed for practical tasks and for serenity and mood. Improperly designed lighting can be obtrusive, glaring and ineffective.

Because of the importance we place on lighting we have instituted a system of lighting design that goes beyond what most residential designers or architects use. Our system allows us to note the "type" of light source not just the location of a fixture. After laying out the floor plan, roof plan and elevations, we will study the design in order to create the most effective lighting design accenting certain features and washing others, etc.

Electrical power at a minimum is prescribed by code. We naturally go beyond the code and consider your specific needs and when requested comply with "Smart Home" criteria. Also, we ask our clients to complete a "Lighting and Electrical questionnaire, which helps incorporate their specific desires.





## 5. What is your philosophy regarding kitchen design?

The kitchen in many instances is the most important design feature of the interior of one's home. Even if the homeowner is not a cooking or food prep fanatic, much of a family's time is spent in and around the kitchen. Because of this, much thought should be given to function, flow and appearance. Further, if the owner is a "home chef" who is really interested in food preparation, he or she will have definite ways of making the kitchen serve their workflow. The many types of food preparation, such as baking, grilling, sushi bar etc. require that the special needs of the chef are taken into consideration and incorporated into the design.

Our experience in commercial kitchen design has given us a depth of understanding in the design of efficient and functional kitchens. However, we know that the kitchen is usually the center of life in a home and **beauty** often overshadows function and flow. Our job is to artistically integrate these two elements. Further, kitchens are the most cluttered or busy appearing room in the house. Simplicity in design is the goal of a pleasing kitchen design in our opinion.



## 6. What about your structural integrity?

The structural integrity of a home design is based on 1) understanding of the reasons behind building codes, 2) construction experience and 3) understanding and familiarity with a multitude of building materials. Our design professional's experience as a contractor and developer has provided us with an in-depth understanding of the technical aspects of home construction. The result is a set of construction documents that exceed local building codes, make sense to building trades and are well received by Homebuilders. As a testimony we have designed the **personal** home for ten of the top Homebuilders in Kerr County. Please ask us for a list of references.



## 7. How would you describe the quality of your design documentation?

After a number of years of dividing our focus between commercial and residential design TexasHomePlans.com limited its design efforts to single family homes. The design concept of every TexasHomePlans.com home is developed by Mr. Thompson personally with close attention and supervision of the drafting details. The staff at TexasHomePlans.com has been created with the idea of “layering” responsibilities with checks and balances. The Designer is free to direct his focus on concept and artistic sculpturing while the Design Coordinator concentrates on detail and mechanics necessary to develop the concept. The design plans for your home will have been reviewed by at least two staff members resulting in increased quality and integrity of the drawings. Since our only business is home design and our experience is extensive, the design process is expedient resulting in a uniquely crafted plan to build your home.

Because we want to design the perfect home for you we ask you questions. As mentioned previously, we have developed a questionnaire that addresses almost every part of your home. After you have completed the questionnaire it becomes a tool that is a great asset for enhancing the quality of the drawings because all layers of the design team become aware of your needs and desires making communications more effective.

## 8. What is included in a set of custom home plans?

Normally we provide what we call a **“Builder’s set of plans”** for custom home designs. Our approach to documentation has proven to be the most effective and efficient means of home architectural development. This is a set of drawings from which Homebuilders can execute a good likeness of what is envisioned for your home. This set of documents typically include the following:

- Floor plan
- All exterior elevations (front, side and rear view)
- Roof plan
- Lighting and electrical plan
- Foundation footprint (includes elevation changes and plumbing layout)
- Building section(s) (Only those necessary to communicate special ceiling or column design or other details not easily described on other drawings)
- Wall elevation of the fireplace
- Site plan.

### What is not included in a **“Builder’s set of plans”**.

There are a number of items that are often included in a set of construction documents, which are not included in a Builder’s set of plans such as:

- **Engineered Foundation Design.** Because of some relatively new legislation most Homebuilders require that the foundation engineering be developed by a licensed/registered Engineer. We are not Engineers nor are but a few Architects in the state licensed professional Engineers. We agree with the Homebuilders that such critical element of the building should be engineered. We do however, coordinate the Engineered Foundation Design.
- **Framing Plans.** Most Builders choose to use either their material suppliers or a trusted third party to develop the framing plans. If the material supplier does this, there is usually no charge to the Builder. If a third party contractor develops the plan, the Builder will usually have developed a style of framing to which said party will adhere.
- **Air-Conditioning System Design.** It is **not** common in the residential construction industry for the Architect or Home Designer to provide the air conditioning system design. We do, however, think through the potential layout to ensure adequate access, return air and duct layout. Often we will consult with an Air Conditioning Contractor concerning questionable situations. We do provide space for and locate return air cavities in most cases. Air conditioning design is as much an art as is engineering. Most residential Air-Conditioning Contractors seem to be very capable of designing and installing the systems from our plans.
- **Plumbing Diagrams.** Again it appears that residential Plumbing Contractors are sufficiently capable of designing and installing a residential plumbing system. There is a state plumbing code that is a strong guide for the Plumbing Contractor. Our Foundation Footprint and Plumbing Layout help considerably to minimize mistakes in locating fixtures, etc.
- **Cabinet Elevations.** Cabinet elevations refer to the front view of the cabinets. Our plans are fairly detailed pursuant to the cabinets in plan view. While we’ve designed a number of

cabinet elevations, most clients today do not want to pay us for that service. Currently, the typical process for your builder is to send you with our plans to his cabinetmaker. Utilizing our very descriptive plan, he will “flesh out” the cabinet plans. Typically the cabinetmaker is mechanized and his equipment is computer driven however, he has to input the data into his computer, as he cannot use the computer information from the Designer’s CAD program. Having said all of this we do from time to time develop the cabinet elevations. It is a costly process, however.

- **Material Descriptions (for specifications).** We do furnish a flooring material list and we also are specific as to “types” of materials utilized on the exterior. We normally do not get involved in specific material selection. For example, we will note where there is to be stone but we do not specify the cut, style, type, color, mortar, etc. Usually the materials to be utilized in your structure are developed from two primary sources... your Homebuilder and your Interior Designer (See paragraph 9. Below).

- **Wall Sections:** Typically we do not provide this detail. A wall section usually includes the composition of the perimeter walls, ceiling and roof (including insulation, sheathing and moisture protection etc.). These items are built as “systems”. There are many different systems and one may be as effective as another. Each Builder has his own desired composition. It has proven to be ineffective for this industry to charge the client for drawing such a variable item. If you have a particular system in mind and would like for us to develop it, we will provide such detail. However, it can usually be settled with your Builder in a matter of minutes and be included in your contract. Generally our clients select a Builder on the basis of his quality as well as price. They have a good idea of his style and quality of wall composition.

## **9. Do you recommend the use of an Interior Designer in conjunction with your design services?**

We highly recommend the use of an Interior Designer. They can simplify your building experience significantly. If you involve your Interior Designer early on, by the time the plans are completed they will have helped you pick out exterior materials and colors, interior materials and colors, wall and ceiling materials, plumbing fixtures, lighting fixtures, appliances and flooring. They will prepare a list to accompany your plans when you submit them to your Builder. With this information you and your Builder will be able to quickly select or specify all other materials necessary to construct your home. You will deal with such items as wall composition (sheathing, insulation, etc) roofing and ventilation. Following this process you will obtain a price from your Builder which should be very accurate with minimal surprises. There should be very few, if any, allowances. These are usually the big surprise items.

## **10. What is the design process?**

Many of our clients are out of town so we have learned how to minimize the number of meetings. Much of our communication can be effected via e-mail, fax, phone or FedEx. In addition to the introductory meeting, typically there will be three meetings: “Intake” “Preliminary Presentation” and “Lighting and Electrical Presentation”. The **Intake** meeting will usually include the site visit. The next meeting will be the **Preliminary Presentation** where we present the preliminary floor plan and a few rough sketches of the elevation. After the Preliminary Presentation we communicate details via fax, e-mail and/or FedEx. Seldom will we need two presentations of the preliminary drawings, but if we are not real close on the first go round, we believe it is important to have a second presentation. The last personal meeting will be the **Lighting and Electrical Presentation**, which usually occurs during the development of construction documents.



### **11. How long will it take to complete the design of my home?**

The design process usually transcends over a three-month period. We have completed plans in two weeks, however, typically the client desires gestation time between design phases. Usually this is a rewarding expenditure of time. However, it is usually best if the process doesn't extend beyond four to five months.

### **12. Do you supervise the construction for compliance to the construction documents?**

We are often asked to follow the construction process as it progresses. We generally refrain from this type of service. However, we are always available to interpret the plans or solve any problems that may arise.

### **13. Is TexasHomePlans.com an architectural firm or a home planning and design firm? What is the difference?**

In the state of Texas one does not have to be a licensed Architect to design homes and/or light construction. While the principal of TexasHomePlans.com majored in Architecture at Texas Tech University, he did not see the need to secure a license. The quality of our work can be favorably compared with any Architecture firm. Our structural knowledge probably exceeds that of most firms' of which we have knowledge. We believe our creativity is comparable or exceeds the best and our economical integrity will also match any other.

### **14. What will your clients tell us about your firm?**

“ Beverly and I want to thank you and all of the staff for your imaginative ideas and creativity in designing our beautiful new home. As you know, our lot had an unusual triangular shape and posed quite a challenge. We can't begin to tell you how pleased we are with the overall look and flow that resulted from your design...”

Rich & Beverly Dodds

“Thank you again for your fine work. You all certainly made the design experience very pleasurable...” Joe & Debbie Johnson