

# DESIGN DECISIONS

BY RENEE DEE

WHEN BUILDING A truly custom home, you have to throw conventional design out the window, says Eric Linthicum of Linthicum Custom Builders. The house's design and style dictate the hundreds of decisions you'll have to make, but don't let them limit your imagination. Here we provide some things to consider – from unusual materials to far-out fixtures. As you tour homes and read up on home design, use this worksheet to record ideas you like. And don't forget to have fun personalizing your custom home in the process.

## INTERIOR

### WALL AND CEILING FINISHES

The sky's the limit when it comes to interior walls. From basic paint to Venetian plaster, hand-torn wallpapers to faux-finished designs, your walls and ceilings can express originality. A Spanish-Colonial home, for example, will likely have wood ceilings and plaster walls, while a contemporary home might incorporate structural glass, corrugated steel or concrete.

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### FLOORING

Your home's flooring is an integral part of the structure, Linthicum says, and it has to be durable, comfortable and structurally sufficient. After all, you're going to walk all over it. Consider a variety of materials: Charming hardwood, cool travertine, comforting carpet or even rich leather can give a room a character of its own. Today, many rustic homes incorporate reclaimed paving materials and massive stone floors, while some modern homes have been known to use illuminated glass floors. Concrete-stained, etched or intricately colored-can be warm and rustic or cool and contemporary, depending on how it's treated.

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## COUNTERTOPS

When pondering countertops, consider all the areas that will need them-your kitchen, bathrooms, laundry room, etc.-and keep both durability and beauty in mind. For example, make sure the marble you choose for your kitchen counters can withstand water and food. From anti-bacterial surfaces to butcher block, natural stone to poured concrete, innovation is key, and practically rules. \_\_\_\_\_

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## WINDOWS

Contemporary Southwestern homes often have butt-glazed windows, while other homes have divided light windows. Aluminum- or vinyl-clad windows can protect the wood from the desert climate, according to Nancy Brunkhorst of Nance Construction. \_\_\_\_\_

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## CABINETS

You'll need to think about cabinets and millwork in the kitchen, bathrooms, laundry room, garage, butler's pantry, closets, bar area and theater. Millwork is often built into the structure, but lately there's been a trend toward freestanding cabinetry, sparked by Old-World style of hefty furniture, Linthicum says. Many custom homeowners choose to have artisans design and handcraft their cabinetry. \_\_\_\_\_

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## APPLIANCES

Competition in the appliance industry has spawned some of the latest high-tech choices. Your appliances, whether your refrigerator, stove, wine-storage unit or dishwasher, could make even a professional chef envious. As far as aesthetics go, stainless steel is popular now, or you can have your appliances overlaid with matching cabinetry. Don't forget to consider energy efficiency. \_\_\_\_\_

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## CLOSETS

You can include every organizational built-in imaginable in a custom closet. Tie, belt and shoe racks, folded-shirt drawers, jewelry drawers, safes, mirrors, a stackable washer and dryer and sorted laundry baskets are all options. For a clean, formal look, your personal items can all be enclosed and hidden behind handcrafted millwork. \_\_\_\_\_

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## PLUMBING FIXTURES

Your fixtures-in the kitchen, bathrooms, laundry room and wet bars-can turn an ordinary sink into a work of art. "They're no longer just function," Linthicum says. "They're form." Consumers are spending a lot of money on beautifully designed fixtures, realizing that the details are an important part of home's overall design. Even designers like Philippe Stark and Michael Smith have their hands in fixture design these days.

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## LIGHTING

Custom lighting fixtures have become more sculptural and are often designed and built specifically for each custom home, Linthicum says. Don't forget to think about ceiling fans, phones and automation systems. Lighting can add drama, set a mood and highlight art or architectural features.

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## BACKSPLASHES AND TUB SURROUNDS

What might seem like a small detail can become extremely creative. Tub surrounds come in anything from a handpicked slab of granite or limestone to stainless steel to hand-painted tiles. Backsplashes may seem purely decorative, but architects are now designing compartments behind them to store small appliances.

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## AUDIO/VISUAL

Sound contributes to your home's ambience. Before you reach the framing stages, decide where you'll want speakers and what you'd like automated. Wire it now for the future, so you won't have to dig into the walls for more wiring later, and be sure to use a professional if you're doing anything elaborate.

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## FIREPLACE MATERIALS

Fireplaces are great ways to create visual impact. Materials range from masonry to ceramic brick, but beware-your fireplaces may be limited by city regulations. \_\_\_\_\_

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## DOORS AND HARDWARE

When choosing your doors, first consider how many you'll need. The choices are endless; reclaimed wood doors and steel doors custom-created by metal artists are just two examples from a wide spectrum. When choosing wood doors, keep in mind which color you want to stain them. The hardware you choose can make an ordinary door extraordinary, but make quality a priority-many times the less-expensive hardware is harder.

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## MOLDINGS AND DOORFRAMES

As with many of your decisions, your home's architectural context should help you decide on moldings and doorframes. Materials come in wood, plaster, bronze and stone (to name a few), so look to your architect or designer for help. One rule of thumb, according to the interior designer David Michael Miller, is that woods should represent what they are-don't treat maple to make it look like cherry. \_\_\_\_\_

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# EXTERIOR

## PAINT AND EXTERIOR FINISHES

As with interior finishes, the exterior depends on the structure's architectural style. Antique platter finishes, mortar washes, reclaimed brick and staining done by artisans can give a building an aged appearance. Contemporary homes may have exposed concrete, exposed CMU (block masonry) and finishes like split-faced masonry, sandblasting or plaster. \_\_\_\_\_

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## ROOF

Cement and clay tiles will last a lifetime, so make sure you like what you pick. Roofing materials range from slate to wood shingles, concrete, copper and zinc. \_\_\_\_\_

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## DRIVEWAY

The first thing people will step on when arriving at your home is the driveway, so consider making it special. For a rustic look, try decomposed granite. A popular trend is to incorporate reclaimed Mexican stone that's no longer needed after a street has been newly paved. More standard driveway materials include concrete and asphalt. \_\_\_\_\_

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## FENCES AND GATES

With city regulations dictating the locations and functions of fences and gates, homeowners often struggle to make them look appealing and strike a balance between privacy and views. Try to incorporate your pool fencing into the house's architecture. \_\_\_\_\_

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## POOL AND SPA

New pool finishes offer more options than Pebble Tec and plaster. Consider utilizing mosaics or glass tile. Decide whether you prefer a free-form, lagoon-style pool with natural features like boulders, or a modern pool with negative edges and a clean geometry. \_\_\_\_\_

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## FRONT DOOR

"Front doors have really become an important part of the architecture," Linthicum says. Homeowners are spending anywhere from \$2,500 to \$75,000 on their front doors, which can come in glass, hand-carved wood, stainless steel and just about anything else your imagination can invent. \_\_\_\_\_

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## GARAGE DOOR

In order to keep the look of the garage door consistent with the rest of your home, clad it in an appropriate material, if it's something like copper, zinc or cedar. Garage doors are often insulated now, so air-conditioning will have a harder time escaping. \_\_\_\_\_

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## PATIOS AND OUTDOOR WALKWAYS

In Arizona, outdoor living is key. Carry the indoors out by incorporating lighting, heaters, coolers and sophisticated furnishings and tiling your patios. Depending on what you like and how much time you're willing to invest, your lawn could be grassy or a haven for desert plants. \_\_\_\_\_

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GARAGE