

Topic No. 8: Step 3 - Search for Home Floor Plans

Topic objective: To advise consumers where to look for home floor plans and the options and processes they should consider.

Many people become interested in building a new home when they see a floor plan they like in a new homes magazine. Wherever the interest starts, it is important to do a thorough search of plans that will accommodate all or most of your needs. Before searching for plans, a necessary step is to identify all of your basic and desired needs for the home.

Among the many sources for plans, an Internet search is the best place to start. Many of the builders in your community will have Web sites on which they will display floor plans for all of the homes they have under construction. Some great resources on the Internet are architectural firms that specialize in residential home designs. Some of these companies have thousands of plans, and many are displayed on their Web sites. Other sources include searches at public libraries, book stores and retailers such as Home Depot and Lowe's. Some communities have home builder associations that promote new home "parades." Many of the associations publish booklets that will contain hundreds of home plans.

After you have identified a plan you think will meet your needs and your budget, it is time to search new home developments for similar plans. You will want to continue this search until you have found a home close enough to the plan you have selected to be able to visualize your plan when built. If you do not find adequate plans, you can draw out the plan on a ¼-inch to one-foot scale and also find furniture drawings with the same scale so that you can determine how furnishings will fit in the plan. To get a proper feel for the size of the home, you might even want to find an open patch of ground and stake out the floor plan in full scale. When you draw a line between the stakes, you can begin to place furniture sizes by outlining the size of furniture items with lime. This is a very practical step that will allow you to walk through the rooms and get a real feel for the floor plan.

After selecting a plan that fits your needs, your difficult task will be to find a builder who builds a similar plan. If you can do this, you may avoid the expense of hiring an architect to develop the drawing and specifications for your plan. An alternative is to hire an architect to design a plan for you. These plans will be expensive, however, you will be able to have several builders bid on building your plan, and you may find that when builders know they are competing with others for the job, the total cost for your home will be much lower. If you find a plan on one of the architectural firm Web sites that meets your needs, you will be able to purchase the plans at cost much lower than having an architect develop your plan.