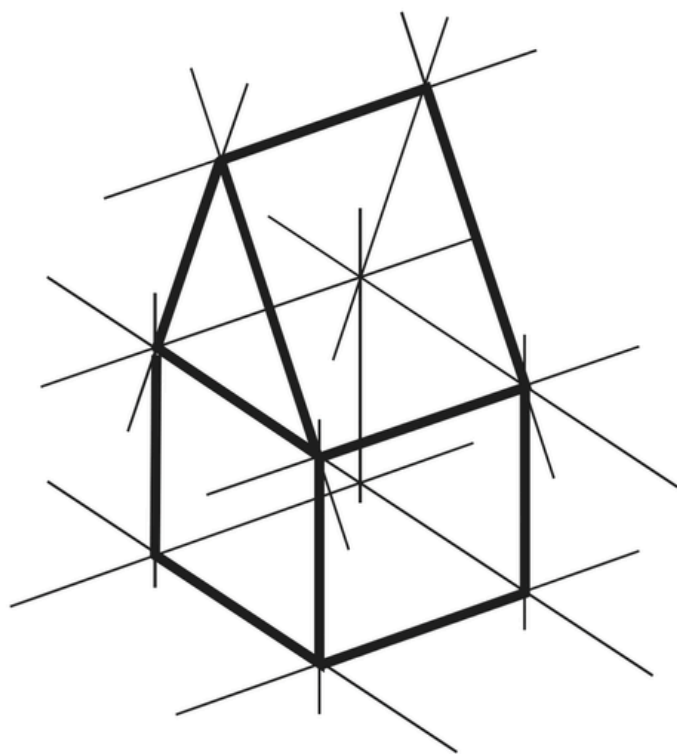


HOW TO | ↔ | DESIGN YOUR | ↔ | **DREAM HOME**

A Step-by-Step Guide



Presented and Published By



REYNARD
CUSTOM HOMES

reynard.design

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SECTION

ONE:

MASTER

PLANNING





1. VISION STATEMENT

2. AESTHETIC



3. FUNCTION AND FLOW



Introduction


There is something very special to me about seeing the design process unfold from initial vision to final construction. Especially with something as personal as a home.

The synthesis for this book came in 2020 when my business partners James Knight, Kalyn Kight, and I were working together at an architectural firm in Atlanta. In June of that year, James and I drove down to Locust Grove, GA for a site visit with a newly retired couple during the height of the pandemic.

They had recently purchased a lakeside lot and envisioned a unique "Asian-style" custom home. Commercial architectural projects were on pause at the time, so we eagerly took on the job together.

Throughout this project, we learned a lot about developing an architectural vision for a single family custom home as well as the nuts and bolts of completing the permitting and construction process.

We learned that the design and build process can bring frustrations, unexpected challenges, and plenty of ups and downs. But what's still so attractive about it is the unique opportunities to explore creative ideas, adapt to budgets, and collaborate as a team to make something extraordinary and personal happen.



This handbook is the product of five years of working with clients who each had a distinct vision for their home.

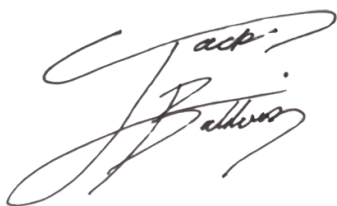
Not every design commission has resulted in a completed build—life changes, unforeseen circumstances, and the unpredictability of the world have played their parts.

However, every project has taught us something valuable. As of this writing in 2025, I'm proud to share that 42 single-family homes we've designed with our clients have been completed, with at least a dozen more currently in various stages of construction.

Each home tells its own story and reflects the creativity, collaboration, and care that define our partnerships with our clients.

In this handbook, I hope you draw inspiration from the stories we've collected, learn from the insights we've gained, and feel a sense of community among others who share the dream of building a custom home.

Happy designing!

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jack Baldwin". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping "J" and "B".

Jack Baldwin

Co-Founder and Managing Partner,
Reynard Custom Homes



What you'll need

- Dedicated notebook and pen.
- [Google Drive account to access the Docs \(free with Gmail\).](#)
- Home Design Ideas.
- [A Pinterest account.](#)
- An openness to learn.
- A cup of coffee or your favorite drink.
- [Membership to our Discord Community.](#)

JOIN THE DISCORD

ACCESS YOUR WORKBOOK



Start With Your Vision

In this first step, you will work hands-on to establish a clear **Vision Statement** for your home.

Defining your vision will enable you and your architect to collaborate and create a feasible and personalized design for you and your family.

This statement will become the cornerstone of your entire project. Without it, transforming your dream home from an abstract idea into a tangible reality will be difficult.

You're working on creating a personal and intentional phrase that encapsulates your home's **PURPOSE** and **PRIORITIES**.

To get there, you're going to answer the WHY, WHO, WHAT and HOW questions about this home to guide your vision.

Let's get started!

WRITING YOUR VISION STATEMENT

If you haven't yet, now's a good time to create an editable copy of the associated workbook here.

Start with why. Answer as briefly as possible and be honest with yourself.

WHY should this home be built? What purpose will it serve?

WHO will live in the home? A growing family, a retired couple, vacationers?

WHAT will the home provide for its residents? A space for children to grow, a relaxing retreat, room for hobbies and personal growth?

HOW will the home be used? Hosting family gatherings, pursuing hobbies, creating a peaceful retreat?

Now in your workbook, take your answers and write a 1-3 sentence statement that sums up the vision for your home.

Feeling Stuck?

Go to the **“Must Have/Could Haves”** list on your worksheet. List out non-negotiables next to the items you'd like to have only if it makes sense.

Here are some real examples from three of our clients to help you out.

VISION STATEMENT #1

"Our dream home will nurture our growing family, offering space for our kids to thrive, host gatherings, and create lasting memories with loved ones." [See more of this home](#)



VISION STATEMENT #2

"Our forever home will support us in retirement, providing a safe place to age in place and care for our adult son while fostering independence and family connection."

[See more of this home.](#)



VISION STATEMENT #3

"Our lake home will be a peaceful retreat for our family, perfect for relaxation, bonding, and enjoying time on the water." *See more of this home.*



Your Turn! Craft Your Unique Vision Statement

Use your answers to the questions on the worksheet to write your own vision statement. This will serve as the foundation for your Dream Home Master Plan.

Remember, this is your story—be as descriptive and personal as you'd like. The more vivid your vision, the easier it will be to bring it to life.

You want a sentence or two, not paragraphs.

Here are some tips to think about as you start:

Understand Your Value:

Your vision statement should uniquely reflect your personality, preferences, and lifestyle.

The best way to do this is to understand your **VALUES**.

Spend time at this stage writing down as many value words in your workbook as you can to guide the vision

You can find a values word bank in your workbook to get started.



Be “SMART”: The more detailed your vision, the better. As you’re writing think **SMART. Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Timely.**

For more on how to set SMART goals, read this article.

Enjoy the Journey: Embrace the process and savor every moment but also surround yourself with a supportive design team.

Stay Flexible: While having a clear vision is essential stay open to new ideas and possibilities that may arise during the process.

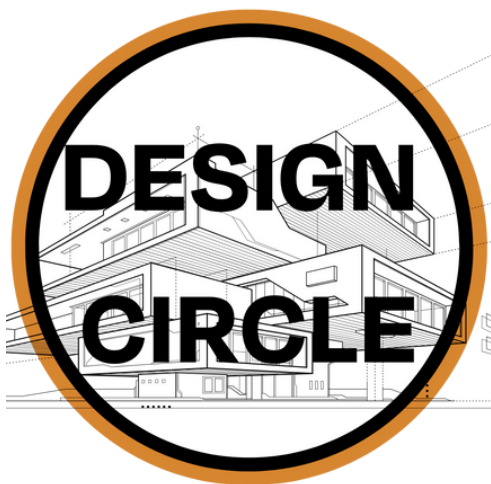
Think long-term: Think about how your home will be used from the day you move in but also 5, 10, even 30 years from now.

Take a moment now to write a two to three sentence Vision Statement in your workbook.

BONUS

Join The Discord Community “DESIGN CIRCLE”.

This isn’t going to be an easy project but participating in the DESIGN CIRCLE community



Congratulations!

You now have a Vision Statement in place to start your home design! It may be augmented as we go but that's to be expected.

Keep your Vision Statement handy. It may even help to read it from time to time to remind you of your values and WHY you're doing this in the first place.



bring
your
vision
to
life



"We shape our buildings,
thereafter they shape us."

-Winston Churchill



Define Your Aesthetic

With your **Vision Statement** for your home in hand you have a concise yet powerful set of words to guide you and your architect.

Kinda like your North Star.

It's time to begin thinking about your personal style and aesthetic. This part is usually pretty fun.

When we say "**Aesthetic**" we're talking about a home's fundamental design principle that lines up with your Vision Statement.



To define your aesthetic, start with a "Vocabulary" for your home.

This is all about turning images you like into words that give meaning to your design.

Regularly discussing your vision with your architect and using this shared vocabulary ensures everyone is aligned and speaks the same language.

Feeling Stuck?

Go to the VOCABULARY section in your workbook and find the Word Bank to get you started.

You'll find descriptive words, as well as elemental material words to help you get started.

Grab your notepad or use the Doc to write down 20 of your favorite words listed or add any words not listed you can think of.



CASE STUDY: Stella Luna

Stella is an A-frame retreat in Sevierville, Tennessee designed and built by a young family who wanted to get into the short term rental business.

Vision Statement

"Stella Luna will be a modern A-frame home for vacationers in the Smoky Mountains. It will offer a tranquil retreat blending contemporary design with the stunning natural landscape."

Purpose- This home was designed as a short term rental retreat that provides relaxation and escape for vacationers in the Smoky Mountains.

Priorities—The clients' most important priority was unique enough to attract guests and keep them coming back.



Design Vocabulary:

1. Modern
2. Relaxing
3. Inviting
4. Scenic
5. Fun
6. Serene
7. Vibrant
8. Warm
9. Sleek
10. Adventurous

The Project Brief

During our initial conversations with our clients regarding their cabin in the Smoky Mountains, they shared their vision of a sleek, modern mountain cabin home.

The decision was made early to keep the program to a modern A-frame-style home, which meant expansive windows and architecturally shaped glass to capture views and as much natural light as possible.

Creating a Mood Board

After sharing their design vocabulary with the design team, the client began uploading inspirational images to our shared project board and sharing ideas.

[Check out Stella Luna's Pinterest Board for more ideas.](#)

Material Experimentation

Drawing inspiration from the mood boards and through material exploration, we a design that respected the Smoky Mountain setting while incorporating modern touches and regional appeal.

Design Features

Living Room

- Matte black steel accents
- Wooden beams
- Vaulted ceilings
- Natural stone details
- Dark stone tiled fireplace

Kitchen

- Matte black steel accents
- white quartz countertop
- Rich green cabinets with clean lines
- Pendant lighting for a modern and warm ambiance
- Leather barstools with black metal

Master Bedroom

- Black walls creating a bold and intimate mood
- Wooden ceiling for added warmth

Bathroom

- Terrazzo flooring
- Soaker tub
- Glass-enclosed shower
- Green bathroom tile

Stella Luna's story underscores how critical it is to define your design style and aesthetic as you develop your vision and discuss ideas with your architect early in the process.

This fun stage is full of discovery and inspiration but requires thoughtfulness, balance, attention to detail and listening to feedback.

It's also an important stage because a consistent and intentional design aesthetic will be the foundation for your future choices.





Your Turn! Define Your Aesthetic

Once you've found inspiration, it's time to define the key elements of your own aesthetic. Here are some key considerations to guide you.

Name Your Architectural Style: Traditional, contemporary, minimalist, industrial, or a blend of styles think about a “working title” for your aesthetic that makes sense to you.

Materials: Natural materials like wood and stone or sleek finishes like glass and metal will help guide your aesthetic development.

Color Palette: Neutral tones, bold pops of color, or a mix of warm and cool hues. Think about which color families will make up your template.

Lighting: Consider how natural and artificial lighting will enhance the mood and functionality of your space.

Look at Your Surroundings: A mountain house may feature wood and stone, while a seaside retreat might use light colors and large windows.

Explore: Take a look at the vernacular architecture of nearby homes and decide how closely you want your design to align with the local style.

Browse Design Resources—Explore design magazines, Pinterest boards, and websites featuring custom homes.

BONUS

foxtrot—The Story of Home is a free magazine that can help spark ideas! Grab your free copy!



Practical Exercise

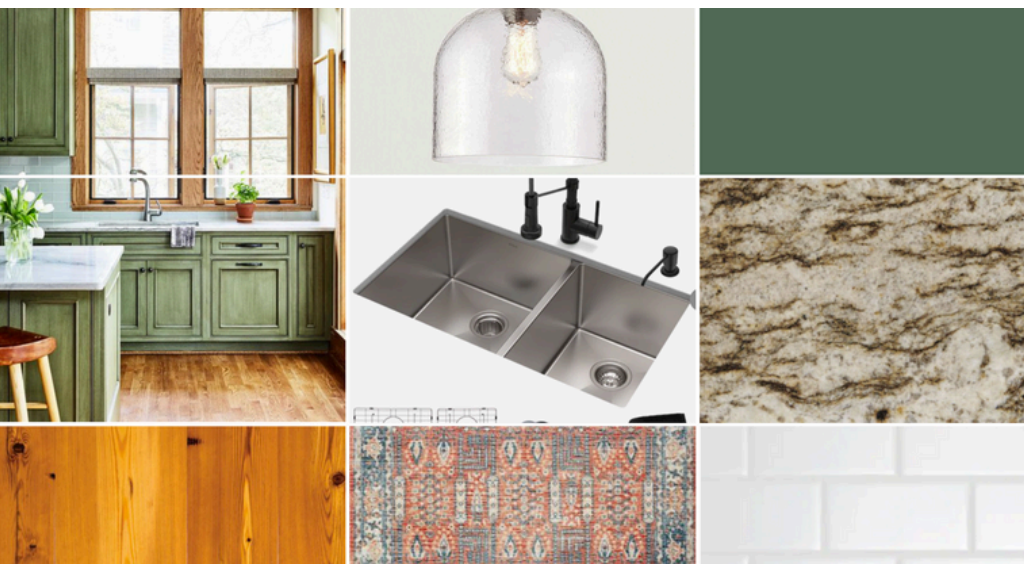
Gather Images: Collect photos, fabric swatches, paint samples, and other materials that reflect your style.

Organize by Theme: Group your selections into color, texture, materials, and architectural elements. To guide your process, you can also organize your Pinterest/Mood Boards room by room (living room, bathroom etc).

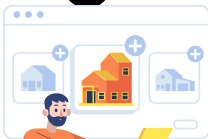
Refine Your Choices: Narrow your selections to the elements that best represent your style and flair.

Share with Your Architect: Ask questions and don't be afraid to use "wrong terms". You're just working on good communication and getting your ideas across right now.

In your workbook find the section on Design Aesthetic and begin writing down your favorite phrases from the word bank to get you started.



don't
stop
dreaming.



"Architecture should speak of its
time and place, but yearn for
timelessness."

– Frank Gehry



Function and Flow

By now you should have the following in hand:

1. Vision Statement

2. Design Aesthetic

In this chapter, you'll start identifying the Function and Flow of your home. These two key elements that will shape your living space for daily use.

"Function" refers to how you will use your living space and which practical needs it will fulfill. **"Flow"** refers to how you will experience and engage with the living space.

Here's the story of a family we worked with who came to Reynard with some unique function and flow challenges for their home design in Cumming, GA.



CASE STUDY: Chamblee Gap

The family, which included a special needs adult son living onsite, starting talking to James Knight about a clear vision: design a home that balanced independence and connection as well as a place to age in place and pursue hobbies.

A ranch layout was ideal for minimizing barriers and creating a sense of openness throughout the home. By eliminating stairs and focusing on wide, flowing spaces, we ensured that each area was easily accessible.

Designing Separate Spaces with Purpose

After understanding the main floor plan requirements for the entire home James began thinking of ways to carve out a dedicated full suite living area for their son.



The private entry to the separate apartment not only offered the son a profound sense of independence but also a strong feeling of ownership over his space.

This entry was strategically placed on the side of the house, providing privacy while still being connected to the main home.

A shared outdoor patio, not just a space, but a transitional area, was incorporated nearby, fostering a sense of family connection.



Thoughtful Flow for Everyday Living

Flow was critical in designing this single-story ranch home, especially given the family's unique needs.

The layout was carefully planned to minimize barriers and create a natural, intuitive movement between spaces.

Wide hallways and smooth transitions between rooms ensured the home was functional, comfortable, and adaptable to the family's changing needs.



By focusing on function and flow, we created a space that supports their son's autonomy while fostering the connection and care that define their family dynamic.

Your Turn! What's Your Function and Flow?

Since functionality is all about how your home supports your living needs, a functional home is designed. So, we start asking some critical starter questions.

In your workbook, you'll find 5 questions and a word bank that will help you start thinking about how to best use your home space.

Daily Routines: Think about the rhythm of your day. Where do you spend the most time? Do you need a dedicated workspace, a playroom for kids, or a home gym? Are you caring for an adult or a child?

Storage Needs: Plan for ample storage to keep your home organized and clutter-free. Consider built-in solutions, walk-in closets, or creative storage ideas like under-stair compartments.

Future Growth: If your family is growing or you anticipate lifestyle changes, ensure your home can adapt. For example, a guest room could double as a future nursery or home office.

Special Features: Identify any must-have features that will enhance your daily life, such as a mudroom, a walk-in pantry, or a laundry room conveniently located near the bedrooms.

how will you
experience
your new
home?



"A house is a machine
for living in"
- *Le Corbusier*



END OF SECTION ONE

Congratulations!

You now have the building blocks of your Master Plan in hand.

- A Vision Statement
- Design Vocabulary
- Function and Flow Guide

IN SECTION TWO

Next, you will start designing developing your
CONSTRUCTION AND PERMIT SET with your architect.

This includes your site plan, floor plans, elevations, building sections and all the architectural details that go into getting your home built your way.

Happy designing!

Jack



HOW TO DESIGN YOUR DREAM

H O M E

WORKBOOK APPENDIX

VISION STATEMENT

Write the answers to these three foundational questions with **Purpose** and **Priority** in mind;

WHO will live in the home? A growing family, a retired couple, vacationers?

WHAT will the home provide for its residents? A space for children to grow, a relaxing retreat, room for hobbies and personal growth?

HOW will the home be used? Hosting family gatherings, pursuing hobbies, creating a peaceful retreat?

WRITE YOUR VISION STATEMENT BELOW

Must Haves

Example: Large kitchen

Could Haves

Example: Backyard pool

[illegible]

FUNCTION

Below, list your Top 5 functional considerations for your home. You could include phrases like "Aging in place" 🧓, "Raising kids" 👶, "Vacationing" 🏖️, "Hosting parties" 🎉, working from home 💻 Hobby space 🎨 If you have more than 5 feel free to add. The point here is to prioritize and write it down.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

FLOW

Consider the architectural flow of your home by thinking about how you will move between spaces and interact with both your home and your guests. Below list out your flow requirements.

Examples: 🏠 open concept, 👤 hallways, ⬆️ attic, 🎮 finished basement, 🚿 connected bathroom/bedroom, 🔍 large kitchen, 🍴 butler's pantry 🙋 List your flow preferences below and add more if needed. 🙋

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

YOUR STYLE "VOCABULARY"

Modern	Refined	Connected
Rustic	Textured	Quiet
Minimalist	Natural	Serene
Industrial	Neutral	Peaceful
Coastal	Vibrant	Private
Elegant	Earthy	Luxurious
Timeless	Sleek	Glamorous
Contemporary	Geometric	Functional
Transitional	Symmetrical	Durable
Vintage	Asymmetrical	Timeless
Mid-century	Innovative	Heritage
Eclectic	Unique	Refined
Bohemian	Bespoke	Artistic
Farmhouse	Handcrafted	Innovative
Scandinavian	Artisanal	Grounded
Sophisticated	Classic	Bespoke
Traditional	Contemporary	Elevated
Organic	Urban	Flowing
Luxe	Suburban	Layered
Chic	Sophisticated	Organic
Inviting	Dramatic	Whimsical
Warm	Subtle	Playful
Open	Harmonious	Sophisticated
Airy	Balanced	Inviting
Bright	Streamlined	Dynamic
Cozy	Efficient	Adaptable

Exterior Design Elements:

1. Gabled roofs
2. Flat roofs
3. Mansard roofs
4. Dormer windows
5. Clerestory windows
6. Picture windows
7. Bay windows
8. Casement windows
9. Shutters
10. Overhangs
11. Cantilevered structures
12. Wraparound porches
13. Covered patios
14. Pergolas
15. Balconies
16. Juliet balconies
17. Exterior columns
18. Stone facades
19. Brickwork
20. Stucco finishes
21. Board and batten siding
22. Horizontal lap siding
23. Vertical metal panels
24. Timber cladding
25. Courtyards
26. Garden walls
27. Water features (e.g., fountains)
28. Outdoor fireplaces
29. Integrated planters

Material and Finish Elements

1. Polished concrete floors
2. Hardwood flooring
3. Herringbone wood patterns
4. Chevron wood patterns
5. Terrazzo flooring
6. Marble countertops
7. Quartz countertops
8. Butcher block countertops
9. Exposed brick walls
10. Shiplap walls
11. Venetian plaster
12. Metal accents (e.g., brass, copper, steel)
13. Glass partitions
14. Textured tiles (e.g., subway, mosaic)
15. Natural stone tiles
16. Reclaimed wood accents
17. Matte black hardware

Home Values Word Bank

Integrity

Creativity

Collaboration

Excellence

Community

Comfort

Warmth

Sustainability

Authenticity

Innovation

Trust

Harmony

Craftsmanship

Elegance

Security

Connection

Serenity

Functionality

Durability

Belonging

Timelessness

Innovation

Balance

Quality

Energy Efficiency

Adaptability

Light

Natural Beauty

Thoughtfulness

Wellness

Innovation

Attention to Detail

Personalization

Simplicity

Luxury

Openness

Peace

Modernity

Tradition

Refinement

Practicality

Inspiration

Beauty

Care

Simplicity

Flow

Nature

Order

Joy

Freedom