



Poppyseed Design

# The New Build Design Playbook

Your complete step-by-step guide to designing a beautiful,  
cohesive home — from foundation to finish.

 Room-by-Room Guides  Color Palettes ✓ 100+ Checklists  Budget Tracker  
[poppyseed-design.bywillo.ai](https://poppyseed-design.bywillo.ai)

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🌟 **How to use this guide:** Work through each chapter in order before your builder breaks ground. The earlier you make finish decisions, the more money you'll save and the smoother your build will go. Print the checklists — they're your best friend on site visit days.

# The Design Process

Your roadmap from blank walls to a home that feels completely, perfectly *you*.



Plan First



Design Second



Finish Strong

# Your 6-Phase Design Roadmap

Follow these phases in order — each one builds on the last.

1

## Inspiration & Vision (Weeks 1–2)

Collect inspiration images before making any decisions. Create a Pinterest board or physical folder for each room. Look for patterns — you'll notice you gravitate toward certain colors, textures, and styles. This is your design DNA. Share it with your designer or contractor before any selections are locked in.

2

## Floor Plan & Layout (Weeks 2–3)

Review your floor plan with furniture in mind. Where will your sofa face? Where does natural light come from? Mark traffic flow paths. The biggest mistake new-build homeowners make is not thinking about furniture placement before walls go up — window and outlet locations become permanent.

3

## Hard Finishes Selection (Weeks 3–5)

Flooring, tile, cabinetry, and countertops must be chosen before framing is complete. These are your "bones" — everything else layers on top. Always order samples and live with them for 48 hours in the actual room before committing.

4

## Color & Paint Selection (Weeks 4–6)

Paint is the last hard finish but must coordinate with your floors and cabinetry. Choose your primary neutral first, then accent colors. Test large swatches (at least 12"×12") on the actual wall — paint shifts dramatically based on light.

5

## Fixtures & Hardware (Weeks 5–7)

Lighting, plumbing fixtures, door hardware, and cabinet pulls are the jewelry of your home. Choose one metal finish family and stick to it throughout — mixing metals intentionally is beautiful, but accidental mixing looks chaotic.

6

## Soft Furnishings & Styling (Move-in)

Furniture, textiles, and décor come last. The beauty of a well-designed new build is that when the hard finishes are right, the soft furnishings almost select themselves. Budget 15–20% of your total home cost for this phase.

# Living Room

The heart of your home — where first impressions are made and family memories happen.



Furniture Flow



Lighting Layers



Focal Points

# Living Room Design Guide

The most-viewed room in your home. Get this right and everything else follows.

## ★ Flooring Choices

- ✓ **Hardwood (Oak, Maple):** Timeless, adds value. Choose wide planks (5"+) for modern look.
- ✓ **LVP (Luxury Vinyl Plank):** Best for families/pets. 12-mil wear layer minimum.
- ✓ **Engineered Hardwood:** Best of both — real wood look, more stable than solid.
- ✗ **Avoid:** Carpet in open-plan living areas — it dates the space quickly.

## ★ Lighting Strategy

- ✓ **Ambient:** Recessed lights on dimmer, evenly spaced 4–6 ft apart.
- ✓ **Task:** Floor lamp beside reading chair, table lamps flanking sofa.
- ✓ **Accent:** One statement pendant or chandelier as focal point.
- ✗ **Avoid:** Single overhead light only — creates flat, institutional feel.

## 🛋️ Furniture Placement Rules

- Sofa should be **2–3 ft from TV wall** minimum
- Coffee table: **18" from sofa edge**
- Leave **36" pathways** for traffic flow
- Rug should be **large enough for front legs** of all seating
- Anchor with a **focal point** (fireplace, TV wall, window)
- Float furniture **away from walls** — it creates intimacy

## 🎨 Living Room Color Palettes

Warm Neutral

Linen + Walnut + Forest

Classic Cool

Dove + Navy + Gold

Modern Warm

Cream + Terracotta + Slate

# Kitchen

The most valuable room per square foot. Every design decision here has a direct ROI on your home's value.



The Work Triangle



Cabinet Strategy



Countertop Guide

# Kitchen Design Guide

The #1 return-on-investment room. Design it for how you actually cook, not how you want to cook.

## Cabinet Selection Guide

- ✓ **Shaker style** — timeless, works with any hardware
- ✓ **Full overlay doors** — modern, cleaner look
- ✓ **Soft-close hinges** — non-negotiable standard now
- ✓ **Dovetail drawer boxes** — sign of quality construction
- ✓ **Upper cabinet height:** Go to ceiling to maximize storage
- ✗ **Avoid:** Raised panel doors — they collect dust and date quickly

## Countertop Comparison

Quartz Best overall · \$\$\$

Quartzite Luxury natural · \$\$\$\$

Granite Classic, durable · \$\$\$

Marble Beautiful, high-maint · \$\$\$\$

Butcher Block Warm accent · \$\$

## Backsplash Strategy

- **Subway tile** (3×6"): Classic, never wrong. Choose a contrasting grout color for interest.
- **Large format tile** (12×24"): Modern, fewer grout lines to clean.
- **Statement tile** behind range: One bold moment, rest stays neutral.
- **Slab backsplash:** Countertop material carried up the wall — ultra-modern, seamless.

## Kitchen Lighting Must-Haves



Under-Cabinet

LED strips illuminate countertops. Run them before drywall!



Pendants

Over island: hang 30-36" above surface, 24-30" apart




Recessed

4" cans over work zones. Always on dimmer switch.

# Primary Bedroom

Your personal sanctuary. The one room that should be designed entirely for you — not for guests, not for Instagram.

 Bed Placement

 Mood Lighting

 Closet Design

# Primary Bedroom Guide

Design this room for rest, intimacy, and calm. Every decision should reduce visual noise.

## Layout Fundamentals

- ✓ Bed on **the wall opposite the entry door** when possible
- ✓ Minimum **24" clearance** on each side of the bed
- ✓ Minimum **36" at foot** of bed for traffic
- ✓ **Nightstands at mattress height** — measure before buying
- ✓ Plan for **two reading lights** — sconces save nightstand space
- ✗ Don't place bed **under a window** — drafts and light disruption

## Lighting for Sleep

- ✓ **No overhead light on main switch** — use lamps instead
- ✓ **Dimmer on every circuit** in the bedroom
- ✓ **2700K bulbs** — warm light signals sleep to your brain
- ✓ **Blackout capability** — cellular shades or lined curtains
- ✓ **USB outlets** in nightstand location pre-wired
- ✗ **Avoid cool/daylight bulbs (5000K+)** — they suppress melatonin

## Walk-In Closet Planning

**Minimum dimensions:** 6'×8' for a functional walk-in. 8'×10' for a comfortable his-and-hers.

**Must-have zones:** Long hang (dresses/coats), double hang (shirts/pants), shelving, shoe storage, drawer unit.

**Don't forget:** Island with drawers if space allows (adds major value). Center light over island.

**Pre-wire for:** LED strip lighting inside closet (makes everything visible, feels luxurious).

## Bedroom Color Psychology

Soft Blue

Lowers heart rate, promotes calm sleep

Warm Greige

Cocooning, timeless, flattering in all light

Sage Green

Connects to nature, reduces anxiety

# Bathrooms

Spa-level design doesn't require a spa budget. The right tile, lighting, and fixture choices transform a basic bathroom into a luxury experience.



Shower Design



Vanity Selection



Fixture Finishes

# Bathroom Design Guide

High ROI per square foot. Splurge on tile and fixtures — save on vanity cabinets.

## Primary Shower Musts

- ✓ **Minimum 36"×48"** — 36"×36" feels cramped
- ✓ **Curbless/zero threshold** — modern, ages-in-place friendly
- ✓ **Linear drain** — cleaner look, one grout line direction
- ✓ **Niche at elbow height** (pre-frame during rough-in)
- ✓ **Bench** if space allows — doubles as foot rest
- ✓ **Rain head + hand spray** — two valves minimum
- ✓ **Large format tile** (12×24" or 24×48") — fewer grout lines

## Fixture Finish Guide

Matte Black

Most popular, hides water spots, bold statement

Brushed Nickel

Timeless, coordinates with everything

Champagne Bronze

Warm, luxurious, trending upward

Polished Chrome

Classic, shows water spots — clean regularly

## Vanity & Mirror Strategy

- **Double vanity** minimum 60" for primary bath — this is non-negotiable for resale value.
- **Floating vanity** makes the room feel larger and is easier to clean.
- **Mirror width** should match vanity width exactly or span full wall to wall.
- **Backlit mirror** or sconces flanking — overhead vanity lighting alone creates unflattering shadows.

# Materials Guide

Flooring, paint, and fixtures are the foundation of every design.

Choose wrong and no amount of furniture fixes it.



Flooring



Paint



Fixtures

# Flooring & Paint Selection Guide

## Flooring Selection Matrix

Material	Durability	Cost/sqft	Best For
Solid Hardwood	★★★★	\$8-\$15	Living, Dining, Bedroom
Engineered Wood	★★★★	\$6-\$12	Whole home, over slab
LVP Premium	★★★★★	\$4-\$8	Anywhere, esp. wet areas
Porcelain Tile	★★★★★	\$5-\$20	Bathrooms, entryways
Carpet	★★	\$3-\$7	Bedrooms only

## Paint Selection Rules

- **Always test on the actual wall** — large 12"×12" swatches, not small chips
- **Observe in morning AND evening light** — colors shift dramatically
- **Finish matters:** Eggshell for walls, semi-gloss for trim and doors
- **Choose your primary neutral first** — everything else coordinates to it
- **Limit to 3-4 colors** whole-home for cohesion
- **Ceiling color:** White (classic) or 50% of wall color (cozy, enveloped feel)








# Budget Tracker

Know your numbers before you fall in love with finishes. A realistic budget prevents heartbreak at the design center.

10–15%  
of home cost for interiors  
20%  
contingency buffer always

# Budget Allocation Guide

For a \$400,000 new build, here's how to allocate your design budget:

Category	% of Budget	\$400K Home	Priority
 Flooring	20–25%	\$8,000–\$10,000	HIGH
 Cabinetry	25–30%	\$10,000–\$12,000	HIGH
 Countertops	10–15%	\$4,000–\$6,000	MED
 Tile & Bath	10–15%	\$4,000–\$6,000	MED
 Lighting & Fixtures	10–12%	\$4,000–\$5,000	STD
 Paint	5–8%	\$2,000–\$3,200	STD
 Furnishings	Buffer	15–20% of home cost	POST MOVE-IN

## Budget Pro Tips

- ✓ **Splurge on floors and tile** — impossible to change cheaply later
- ✓ **Save on cabinet boxes**, splurge on hardware and pulls
- ✓ **Always get 3 bids** on countertops — pricing varies wildly
- ✓ **Buy appliances as a package** — bundle discounts up to 15%

# Master Checklist

100+ items to confirm before, during, and after your build. Print this. Bring it to every site visit.

- Pre-Build
- Before framing begins
- During
- While construction is active
- Final
- Before you move in

# Master Checklist — Pre-Build & During Construction

## PRE-BUILD (Before Framing)

- Floor plan reviewed with furniture in mind
- Window placement confirmed for light + views
- Electrical outlet locations marked on plan
- USB outlet locations specified
- TV wall mount blocking requested
- Ceiling fan blocking in bedrooms
- Pendant light locations over island
- Under-cabinet lighting wiring requested
- Shower niche locations marked
- Closet layout planned with designer
- Flooring selections finalized + ordered
- Cabinet selections + delivery scheduled
- Countertop templates scheduled post-cabinet
- All tile ordered with 15% overage

## DURING CONSTRUCTION

- Walk site weekly — confirm rough-in locations
- Verify shower pan slope direction
- Confirm range hood rough-in location
- Check cabinet delivery matches order
- Inspect tile work before grout is applied
- Paint samples approved on actual walls
- All fixtures on site before install date
- Hardware delivered + counted
- Appliances scheduled for delivery
- Window coverings measured + ordered
- Punch list items documented with photos
- Final walk done with contractor
- All warranties collected + filed
- Touch-up paint cans labeled + stored



# Ready for the full design experience?

This playbook gives you the foundation. But working with a designer takes your new build from "nice" to "exactly right."

Let's create your dream home together.



The Playbook

This guide

\$47



Playbook + Templates

+ Worksheets & trackers

\$97



VIP Bundle

+ 30-min consult with me

\$197

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