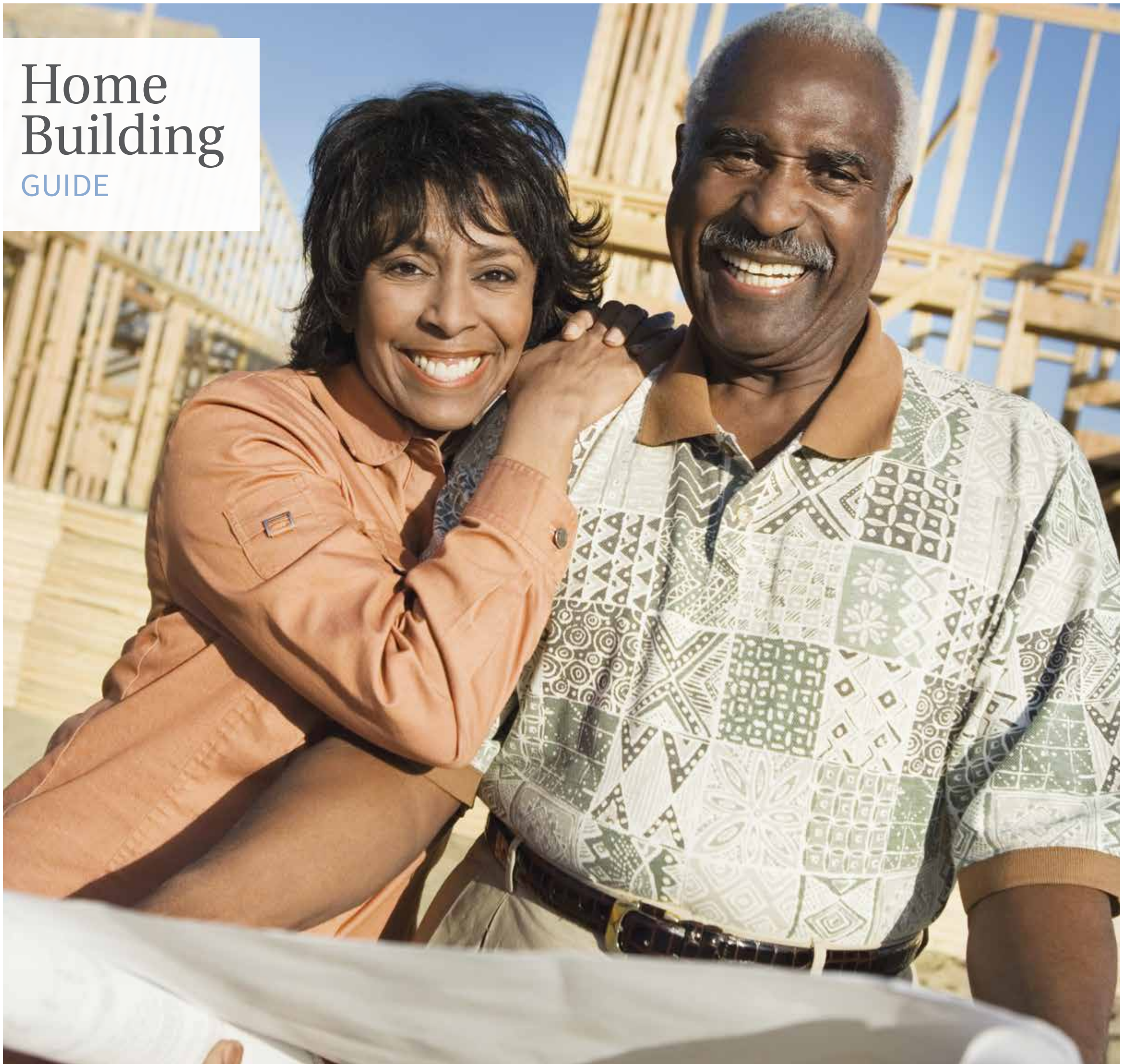


# Home Building

GUIDE







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# Building Sustainably

Building a new home today includes thousands of decisions, many of which can be made more green with just a little research.

Get ready to learn about some great green building trends that can make your new home more friendly for the environment (and possibly even your bank account).

## **CHOOSING A SITE**

We all know that real estate is all about location, location, location. As it turns out, so is sustainability. Pick a site, if you can, that already has utility hook-ups. This means you won't have to disturb the surrounding environ-

ment by digging new lines. Also look for sites that are less affected by storms and flooding. Transportation should also be considered in that the farther you have to drive your car, the larger your carbon footprint becomes. If you can, pick a place where you can take public transportation or walk to most of your destinations.

Also look for a place where you can orient your home to take the most advantage of sun and shade to heat and cool your home.

## **CHOOSING MATERIALS**

In the process of building, try, if you can, to pick local materials that don't have to be brought in from afar. The shorter the shipping distance, the smaller your carbon footprint is. Choosing local materials and craftsmen also keeps money in your community.

Look for recycled materials in your selections. Reclaimed wood, for instance, is a gorgeous choice to incorporate in your home, as are reclaimed bricks and stones. Countertops can be made from recycled glass or stone and even roofing shingles can be made from recycled materials.

## **CHOOSING APPLIANCES**

Look for appliances with the Energy Star label. These have been tested and proven to save on your energy bills. You can also integrate smart technologies and efficient lighting into your new home to save on your energy usage and on your bills.

## **BUILD SMALL**

Smaller houses are more efficient, hands down. Work with your design team to build the smallest house that will work for your family. Building a smaller house will also mean your construction team will spend less energy and resources to build your home.



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# Aging in Your New Home

There's planning ahead and there's planning far ahead. Make sure that when you build your dream home, you build one for life by incorporating features that take into account your needs as you age.

Keep reading for more tips on how to stay in your new house forever.

## LOOK AT YOUR SITE

Pick a location with a walkable neighborhood or one that's close to public transportation in case, at some point, you become unable to drive. Make sure to look for wide sidewalks and a lack of steep hills in the area. Your new home should be close to

offices and other things you use and places you go frequently. This way, in the event you become unable to drive, you can still get to the things you need to get to without a car.

## FIRST-FLOOR LIVING

You can build a two-story home, but make sure you can live comfortably and well on the first floor. Any second-story accommodations can be

future quarters for a caregiver and anything you want for now, including office space or guest quarters. Avoid putting many steps up to the front door and have at least one entrance that is level.

## INTERIOR FEATURES

Inside the house, plan for wide hallways and doorways to allow for wheelchair or walker access, extra ceiling lights and a double shower instead of a tub/shower combination. Also consider raised vanities, anti-skid tubs, lever door handles for easy opening and electrical outlets that are put in an extra six inches off the floor. In the kitchen, put drawers instead of cabi-

nets on the lower level of cabinets. Drawers are easier to reach into and organize than cabinets. Select rocker-style light switches instead of traditional switches; they're easier to grab.

## APPLIANCES

Pick appliances that tick Americans with Disability Act-compliant features. This includes a range with front controls so you don't have to reach over hot pots and room for a wide turning radius in the kitchen in case you're ever in a wheelchair. Front-loading washers and dryers are easier to load and unload, and, when paired with stands, can also be a comfortable height from the ground.



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# On-Trend Kitchen Finishes

Kitchens are the heart of the home. And, as the pandemic rolls on, we're spending more time in them than ever.

Make sure your new home's kitchen is perfectly trendy and yet timelessly stylish with these tips from the experts at Better Homes & Gardens.

## WARM COLORS

White is still a favorite kitchen color, but palettes are getting warmer. PPG Paints told Better Homes & Gardens that unrest in the news tends to push people toward warmer colors. These colors evoke feelings of compassion and comfort. The company released a trio of colors including warm beige, orange and aqua. They recommend pairing these colors with

greenery, natural wood tones, gold accents and woven textures.

## TOUCHLESS FAUCETS

Maybe it's because we've spent all that time washing our hands in the past year, but more and more people are turning to touchless kitchen faucets for better functionality and hygiene.

Also look for motion control faucets, touch-tap faucets and even voice-activated faucets rather than the traditional levers. Matte and brushed finishes are great finish options that don't show fingerprints.

## BIG-TIME STORAGE

More storage, more storage and even more storage is the name of the kitchen game this year. Look for giant pantries and more room for stand-alone freezers.

In cabinets, add larger cupboards and all kind of kitchen organizers to your designs.

## BIG-TIME ISLANDS

The post-pandemic kitchen will feature huge islands of at least 24 square feet. They'll also be adorned with outlets to be work and study areas, not just cooking and storage areas.

Islands will also be functioning as a dining tables and kitchens in general will be incorporating more seating.

## DECORATIVE RANGE HOODS

Range hoods are becoming a decorative focal point of the kitchen. Look for sleek lines and square shapes. Rather than shape, expect the emphasis to be on quality materials such as marble, porcelain or plaster. Natural materials and wood tones create an eye-catching look that pairs perfectly with the warm colors and organic textures in style.

## OUTDOOR CONNECTIONS

Key design elements in 2021's kitchens will be bringing the outdoor in through large windows and bi-fold doors that allow for unobstructed views of the outside. These features also allow fresh air in, another consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic.



# Closing the Open Floor Plan

Spending a year holed up in our homes because of the COVID-19 pandemic may have been the final nail in the coffin of the open floor plan, experts at Realtor.com say.

Finding a quiet spot to take a Zoom meeting or finding the kids space to take a virtual math test is tough in these big, open floor plans that are great for entertaining, which we haven't really been doing much of.

## KITCHEN WALLS GOING BACK UP

Renovations are putting up previously torn down kitchen walls and homeowners are turning to organization professionals to help them find more room for storage and make their kitchen spaces more efficient. Kitchen cabinetry now features more built-in organizers, drawers and trays to help budding chefs have enough room to store their gadgets.

Having a dedicated kitchen keeps kitchen hazards, messes and smells contained in one spot and keeps cooking outside of the view of any guests. They're also difficult to cook in, making the chef take more steps from the fridge to food prep to stove.

## DINING ROOMS ARE BACK

The pandemic that overflowed our kitchens also tried our patience and need for privacy.

Having a room where you can close out noise — virtual schooling, Zoom meetings and everything else — is more important now than ever before.

New dining rooms, though, aren't



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just spaces for eating. They can be libraries, carefully curated so that you and your family are surrounded by your favorite memories and things. And they can help families relax, dining together without seeing the mess in the kitchen or the news on the television in the living room.

## OFFICE SPACE

Working from home isn't going anywhere any time soon, even after the end of the COVID-19 pandemic, so more home plans will need dedicated home office space. Open floor plans aren't conducive to that kind of space and still have it be convenient to homeowners.

## FLUIDITY

The key to new floor plans is keeping them fluid with clean sight lines. Even though walls are going back up, homes won't be warrens anymore. Instead, there will be defined spaces with a flow that works with modern lifestyles.

# Planning for a Pool

Dream home plans often include dream backyards, and those often center on a gorgeous in-ground pool.

Pools, however, are a major construction expense, starting at around \$20,000 and costing upwards of \$100,000, factoring in decking and more. Here are some things to think about when you're planning a new pool.

## LOCATION

Pools are easier to build when the yard is level, so try to choose a spot that's as flat as you can get. You'll also need to consider soil type. For new construction, it's not as much of a consideration, but be sure that there's enough room for construction to take place, including heavy equipment moving around. You'll also want to make sure the site for your pool is clear of any utility lines or other obstructions, so include your pool in the construction planning as early as you can.

## RESTRICTIONS AND ZONING

You should have the most up-to-date zoning and building restrictions before you choose a plan for your pool. Ask your contractor about any permitting processes and anything you'll need to take care of before construction starts. You may also have to



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consider zoning laws such as fencing, pool depth and proximity to utility lines.

## ONGOING EXPENSES

There are other expenditures to consider as well, other than the capital outlay at the beginning of the process. This can include chemicals, which average between

\$50 and \$100 per month, depending on climate, pool size and frequency of use.

A pool's interior finish is typically the biggest ongoing expense. Vinyl liners need to be completely replaced every five-seven years, concrete needs a new coat of paint or sealer every five years, while plaster finishes may last 10-15

years. Some new cement-coated products are meant to last a lifetime.

Equipment should also be in your budget. Pumps, pipes and other equipment will need to be maintained and replaced over time. Utility bills will also be more expensive.

Insurance coverage may

also be more expensive, depending on your company and coverage. Consult with your insurance agent before planning a new pool. You may be able to get discounts for certain safety features. At any rate, you'll definitely want appropriate enclosures to keep children, pets and wildlife safe.



# Planning Ahead: Disasters

More and more disasters such as storms, hurricanes, floods and wildfires are hitting populated areas, damaging and destroying homes.

Resilient design can help people recover more quickly and help structures withstand disasters. Incorporating resilient design into your building plans can keep you safer and save you money in the long run.

## WHEN YOU LOSE POWER

Architects and contractors are stressing survivability in construction, even when the homes lose power. This means extra insulation, quality windows and doors and durable construction. Resilient designs also turn to the natural environment, incorporating passive heating and cooling — situating the home so that it can take advantage of natural sunlight and breezes to keep it warm and cool.

Also consider whole-house solar systems with backup batteries that can power the home without the electrical grid. Many homeowners are considering these systems instead of upgrading cabinets or other luxuries.

## INSULATION

Wrapping your home up in a snug jacket of insulation



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may cost more initially, but it can cut down on your energy usage and bills in the long term. Work with your contractor to choose insulation with a rating that's appropriate to your environment. You should also look at sealing products to help that insulation do its job well and not allow drafts into your home.

## WINDOWS AND DOORS

Your contractor will also be able to help you choose windows and doors that take the most advantage of natural light and keeps out drafts. In hurricane-prone areas, look for materials that can stand up to the punishing winds and rains of tropical cyclones year after year. And don't forget about the

garage door; planning a little now can save you money and trouble in the future.

## FLOODING

If you live in or near a flood-prone area, work with your contractors and engineers to protect your investment. It may mean elevating your home through foundation or dirt

work, or it could be just planning for natural spots for water to gather and flow away from your home. Either way, you want to plan for future development around your home and take that into consideration as well. More paving means more storm water runoff, causing flooding where, historically, there wasn't.



# Choosing a Landscape Plan

Now that the inside of your home is wrapped up, it's time to turn your attention to the outside. The first step is to consider your family's needs. Do you prefer privacy? Expanses of lush, green lawn? Is your environmental impact important to you?

It's a lot of questions and it can get overwhelming quickly, especially if you don't really have a green thumb. The good news is that there are professionals that can help. Landscape architects specialize in designing outdoor spaces that can help accentuate your family home.

## WHAT DO LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS DO?

Landscape architects design beautiful and functional outdoor spaces, including the locations of driveways, walkways and more. They can help you plan a picture-perfect lawn and garden that merges cleanly with the natural environment and meets the needs of your family. They can also make sure the maintenance in the space matches both your level of expertise and the amount of time you're willing to put into it.

## NATIVE LANDSCAPING

A trend that can help people

have a beautiful lawn and garden without a lot of effort or environmental impact is the use of native landscaping. Remember that not all wild plants are native plants; native plants are those that occur naturally in your area and ecosystem without human interference.

By choosing native landscaping, you can reduce the amount of money and time you spend on maintenance, including on watering and fertilizing, because these plants thrive in your climate already. It's also beneficial for wildlife, including the all-important pollinators. A landscape architect that spe-

cializes in native landscaping can even craft spots to attract your favorite birds, butterflies and more to your yard.

## IT'S MORE THAN PLANTS

Your landscape architect can also help you plan out lighting, play areas, picnic spots and other spaces your family enjoys

outdoors. She can show you ways to use resilient, hardy materials and work with the space you have to maximize your family's enjoyment for years to come. Landscape planning isn't just about what happens today, it also takes account how your garden grows many years into the future.



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