

Today's

# CUSTOM HOME

ATLANTA'S COMPLETE GUIDE TO BUILDING OR REMODELING YOUR CUSTOM HOME • MAY/JUNE/JULY 2007



## Window on the World

Benchmark Homes' Whitehall  
Offers Breathtaking Views

## Extraordinary Results

Southern Home Properties  
has Passion for Craftsmanship

## Simple Decision

Flowing Plain Attracts Family to  
Michael Robinson Homes



# Planning it Out

## How to Get What You Want

By Gregory Palmer, AIA • Photography by John Umberger

Perhaps you've been clipping images of homes and rooms that appeal to you for years or have developed a clear vision of your dream home in your mind. Now, you have acquired a piece of property and are ready to build. Yet amid all of the excitement, how do you make intelligent decisions; how do you get what you really want in a home?

### *Refine Your Wish List*

When you begin the planning process in earnest, you should literally get all of your ideas out on the table. Assemble all of the clippings and materials you've stowed away. Start by removing anything that's no longer exciting to you. By laying out the remaining key words or pictures, you should begin to see relationships between inspirational elements, spaces and details. This should give you some clarity about your fundamental needs and wants, as well as a start in prioritizing the importance of these ideas as the planning process continues.

Remember that just because you have a file of beautiful images, it does not mean that all of them will or should work together in your final design. The formal music room, for example, may strike a sour note when placed adjacent to an Adirondack inspired great room.

### *Consider Your Location*

Once you have an updated list of your needs and wants, it's time to consider your location. People frequently fall in love with a plan and then fail to consider the issues inherent in placing that plan on their particular site. Later, they wonder why the plan does not quite work as they had envisioned.

Before you begin, you must ask two basic, but important questions:

- Are there natural elements or zoning requirements that may affect the plan?
- Are there neighborhood covenants or architectural guidelines to consider?

If not addressed beforehand, edicts from a local government or an association may require quick 'fixes' that compromise a home's overall functionality. Oftentimes, homeowners move forward with a quick solution - even if they aren't happy with it - to keep their project on schedule. By addressing any issues upfront, you gain the luxury of time to arrive at a creative solution that avoids compromising how your home functions.

Conversely, the house may be built exactly to the plan, but the homeowner may one day realize that the laundry room offers the best views. Alternatively, you may have driven through a neighborhood only to stop and stare at a house that was completely alien from its neighbors. It may have been thoughtfully detailed and well constructed, but it clearly didn't fit in its surroundings. These are both cases where the plan was adhered to so strictly that the location was not given needed consideration.

All sites should be addressed independently. Consider the plan, the views, the prevailing winds, the sunlight and the context. Orient the rooms in order to take advantage of the best views. Should these rooms be public or private spaces? The choice is up to you. While some reserve the best views for entertaining, others may want to enjoy them from the privacy of a master suite or library.

At this time, it's also important to consider any amenities, landscaping and outbuildings. They should all be part of the original design concept (even if you don't plan on adding them until later) to ensure a coherent overall design. ►

When you begin to plan your new home, almost every architect, builder and designer advises you to do the same thing — start looking through magazines.



To obtain what you really want in a custom home, you and your residential designer need to consider aspects such as how your particular site will affect your home's floor plan and how the home's architecture will fit in with its surroundings.

### *Study the Setting*

Armed with a thorough knowledge of the regulations and natural elements particular to your site, it's now time to evaluate the surrounding homes.

All too often, we see homes consisting of many disparate elements that are not homogenous to either the house or the neighborhood. Individual elements on a wish list may be perfectly suitable; together they can result in a disjointed mess.

Residential architects and designers understand distinct styles. They can assist you in determining which rules you can bend or break and which should remain steadfast. With your wish list in hand and knowledge of your site, they can work with you to incorporate the ideas that are part of a coherent and contextual whole. The resulting design should suit your needs; it should have distinction and character; it should be able to stand alone while clearly remaining part of its surroundings. Good design is balanced to the point that if you take part of it away or add something to it, it's no longer good – and no longer the home you want.

In the next issue, we'll address exterior materials, interior basics and issues that may impact your long-term satisfaction in your home.

7

*Gregory Palmer, AIA, joined Harrison Design Associates in 1995 and is the firm's East Coast Managing Principal. Today, with Founding Principal Bill Harrison and West Coast Managing Principal, Tony Spann, the company includes a team of more than 75 architects and designers who believe the handcrafted custom home is an individual work of art. The award-winning firm offers site planning, design, architectural interior design, and construction administration and management. For more information, call (404) 365-7760 or visit [HarrisonDesignAssociates.com](http://HarrisonDesignAssociates.com).*

May/June/July 2007



*Traditions*  
 SINCE 1936  
 IN TILE AND STONE  
 800-906-5523  
[www.traditionsintile.com](http://www.traditionsintile.com)