



BuildChi

New Build Road Map

Buyers Guide



DISCLAIMER

While most builders follow general steps during the build process, each may have unique ways of labeling and presenting these steps.

Some builders may have set in-person appointments for each stage, others may incorporate virtual appointments, and some may replace certain events with email follow-ups and pictures.

For a visual representation of this step-by-step process, please refer to the New Build Road Map Infographic.



New Build Road Map

1. VISIT BUILDER

The first step in building your dream new construction home begins with a visit to a community with your agent. This may involve multiple visits to different communities, which I highly recommend.

During your initial visit, and possibly a few more, you will familiarize yourself with what the builder offers and start making decisions about your new home. This includes:

- Reviewing and selecting from various floor plans
- Exploring available lot options
- Considering current promotions
- Choosing structural options

After these visits, you'll likely take some time to decide if you want to proceed. Finalizing your selections usually happens via email or phone call with the sales representative you met. While this is listed as a single step, the process often involves 2-3 in-person visits. Regardless, your first visit should always be with me, your agent, attending the appointment.



New Build Road Map

2. SIGN YOUR CONTRACT

After finalizing your desired floor plan, lot, and structural options with your sales representative, it's time to review these choices to ensure accuracy in the builder's system. This can be done either virtually or in person.

Before proceeding to the contract, we will attempt any necessary negotiations. You can explore negotiation strategies in my "Negotiating New Guide." Once the build-out is finalized and negotiations are complete, you'll receive your contract, usually in a digital format for digital signing.

It's highly recommended to have your contract reviewed by your attorney before signing. Most builder contracts lack attorney review clauses, which means you can't back out after signing. Although changes to the contract are unlikely, it's important to get legal advice to understand the terms you're agreeing to.

Finally, after signing your contract, you will need to submit your earnest deposit and get pre-qualified with the builder's preferred lender.



New Build Road Map

3. ELEVATION DESIGN APPOINTMENT

After contracting, the next three steps can vary in order based on the builder's schedule and approach. For the purposes of this guide, we'll discuss the elevation design appointment first. Sometimes referred to as your exterior paint selection appointment, this is when you will choose the various colors for your home's exterior.

This appointment covers more than just paint finishes for siding. If your home includes masonry, roofing, trims, front doors, and shutters, you'll likely make those selections at this time.

I highly recommend attending this appointment in person. Colors can appear differently on phone and computer screens compared to real life. Speaking from experience, even with a high-end, color-accurate monitor, real-life colors can still look different. Seeing the colors and textures in person ensures you are happy with your choices.

Following your appointment, you may have a grace period to finalize your color selections, but it's essential to make the most of the time you have during the appointment. Ensure all buyers are present to agree on the choices.



New Build Road Map

4. ELECTRICAL LAYOUT APPOINTMENT

As mentioned in step 3, the order of these appointments may vary due to scheduling constraints. For the purposes of this guide, we'll now discuss the electrical layout appointment. This appointment can be conducted virtually if necessary, but it is usually best done in person.

During this appointment, you will decide on the layout and placement of various light fixtures, ceiling fan/chandelier support boxes, light switches, and outlets. You will also have the opportunity to adjust the number and placement of additional lights and fixtures. Prior to this, you may not have had a clear understanding of where everything will go, which is why a floor plan of the home is provided. With the assistance of your sales rep, you will begin mapping out the layout of the additional lights, switches, outlets, and fixtures.

Keep in mind that some outlets and light switches may already be predetermined according to building codes, and you may only be able to change those you have added on. Similar to the elevation design appointment, there may be a grace period to make adjustments. However, this appointment is likely your primary opportunity to sit down and finalize the plan. Any changes afterward would likely be handled through pictures and communication via email or text.



New Build Road Map

5. DESIGN CENTER

Again, the order of this appointment may vary due to scheduling constraints. For the purpose of this guide, we will now discuss your Design Center appointment.

Unlike the previous two appointments, the Design Center appointment is quite familiar to those exploring new construction. This is because of the extensive range of decisions you will make during this appointment. At the Design Center, you will review and select from a wide array of design options and upgrades available for your floor plan. This includes everything from flooring and tile work to faucets, countertops, and cabinetry finishes.

Typically, you will have dozens of options for each item, often organized in a tier system. These tiers range from "Included" (no additional cost) to levels 1-4 or 5+, with each level increasing in price.

It is important to approach this appointment with caution, as it is easy to overspend on finishes that do not significantly increase the value of your home. Many builders charge a premium for options available at the Design Center compared to doing the work yourself or hiring an outside business, with few exceptions.



New Build Road Map

5. DESIGN CENTER (Cont.)

Although my Options & Upgrades Guide primarily covers structural elements, I do have some recommendations for navigating the Design Center, especially for those using the rebate program who won't have me present during their appointment.

Design elements are more personal and situational, focusing less on resale value and more on what makes you happy and what you can live with. Generally, I advise steering clear of level 4 or 5+ design options. These higher-tier options are rarely worth the premium charged by the builder and are almost always cheaper to source and install through a third party.

The exception is if you need to keep these costs within your mortgage, as post-closing work cannot be included in the mortgage. However, unless this is your forever home, remember that beyond level 2 or 3 items, the additional cost is unlikely to add sufficient value to your home. Trends change over time, and excessive spending on high-tier design options can ultimately result in a net loss, even with strong appreciation.



New Build Road Map

6. MEET MANAGEMENT

Naming this appointment was challenging because builders use different terms for it. Typically, after your design center appointment, unless there are significant delays, you will meet your home's Construction Manager for the first time. In some cases, this may instead be an email introduction.

During this meeting, you will get acquainted with the Construction Manager and review specific details about the builder's process and any community-specific nuances. This is an opportunity to understand how your builder constructs foundations, framing, and other aspects of the home. Some builders might have a display to demonstrate these processes in more detail.

Following this appointment, your Construction Manager will become your primary point of contact for construction-related questions and updates. Expect a significant gap between this meeting and your next appointment, the pre-drywall walkthrough. In the interim, many builders provide photo updates to keep you informed about your home's progress.



New Build Road Map

7. PRE-DRYWALL WALKTHROUGH

The pre-drywall stage is one of the most crucial phases in your build process. By this point, the structural framework of your home is mostly completed, and preparations are underway to start hanging the drywall that will define the various spaces in your home.

During your pre-drywall walkthrough, you will have the opportunity to see your home in this unfinished state. This is also an ideal time to conduct the first of three recommended home inspections. This inspection is vital because it provides a rare chance to examine the framing of your home, ensuring that the builder has not cut corners or made significant errors.

For those not on the full-service plan, please note that inspections must be scheduled with the builder, as they need to approve the dates and times for the inspection.

Typically, your Construction Manager will conduct the walkthrough, explaining the work completed so far. For full-service clients, I will also be present to help identify any potential concerns and ensure that everything is progressing as it should.



New Build Road Map

8. BLUE TAPE WALKTHROUGH

Following a significant gap from your pre-drywall walkthrough, we now arrive at the Blue Tape Walkthrough. At this stage, nearly everything in your home is complete, with only minor cosmetic details left. Typically, you are now just one to two weeks away from closing.

Similar to the pre-drywall stage, I highly recommend conducting your second home inspection at this point. The purpose of this inspection is to thoroughly examine the home and identify any issues that may have arisen since the pre-drywall stage, such as incorrect installations or damage. Ideally, this inspection should be scheduled just before your Blue Tape Walkthrough so that any concerns can be added to the builder's punch list, which you will review and sign off on during the walkthrough.

During the Blue Tape Walkthrough, your construction manager will guide you through the home, explaining the completed work and helping you identify any cosmetic flaws or damage. These areas will be marked with blue masking tape for the builder to address.



New Build Road Map

9. NEW HOME ORIENTATION (FINAL WALKTHROUGH)

A few days after your Blue Tape Walkthrough, you'll have your final walkthrough, which I refer to as the New Home Orientation. This term is used to distinguish it from the final walkthrough conducted for resale homes.

During this orientation, you'll review the home to ensure that any issues identified during the blue tape walkthrough and inspection have been addressed. However, unlike resale homes, you'll also be guided through the home by the construction manager and possibly other staff to familiarize yourself with its various aspects. They will explain how to maintain or use different features of the home. For example, you'll learn about your water shut-off valve, how to use your furnace/AC, and how to make adjustments to your water heater or fresh air intake system. You'll also receive guidance on managing concerns covered by your 1-year warranty and be provided with a cheat sheet of important contact information.

Once everything is signed off on, you'll typically proceed immediately to your closing.



New Build Road Map

10. CLOSING

Congratulations, you've made it! It's time to take ownership of your home by meeting at the designated title company location and signing more paperwork than you have likely ever signed before. During the closing, if you've followed my advice, you'll work with your attorney to review all the documentation you're signing, and they will assist in answering any questions you may have. If you didn't use an attorney, don't worry, the title company's staff will similarly walk you through the information.

After you've successfully closed, I'll congratulate you, and then, as the kind person you are, you'll join me for a picture that the title company staff will gladly capture for you. After our photo, we'll part ways, and you'll head back to the builder's sales office to pick up the keys to your brand-new home!

Please note, I didn't mention the third and final home inspection. This inspection should be conducted somewhere around 9 to 11 months after closing on your home. Its purpose is to identify any new issues before the end of your 1-year warranty.