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DESIGN IDEAS

DINING ROOM

Is there room for your furniture, or do you want a built-in hutch for your special dishes? What about a boxed-up ceiling, a vaulted ceiling or dropped beam ceiling? Perhaps a see-thru fireplace shared with the great room? Do you need a formal dining room and an eating nook for day-to-day meals, or will one space accommodate both? Is there a view – perhaps large windows in a turret-type space is a good idea. What about access to a deck (covered or uncovered)?

KITCHEN

Do you prefer an L-shape cabinet arrangement, a U-shape arrangement, or something different? Is a square or odd-shaped work island required, and is it large enough for a separate sink? Will you need a cabinet pantry, a walk-in pantry, or a walk-thru pantry to the garage entrance area? Is there a view to be taken advantage of, and/or is natural light important? What kinds of appliances do you want – a standard set, or a cook top and separate oven? Do you want an economical kitchen, or something that is eye-catching? Talk to a kitchen cabinet specialist to get some unique ideas for your home.

OFFICE

Most people have a computer, so it does make sense to have a home office area for it (if clutter isn't an issue, perhaps a desk near the kitchen is a better solution)? Do you want it to be a larger room with double french doors, or is a small room adequate? Is it on the main floor, or on the upper storey that is open to the great room below? Should there be a built-in desk or some built-in bookshelves here? Will this space also be used for guest accommodations, and if so, is there a bathroom nearby for their usage?

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

8', 9' or 10' ceilings, and are they flat or vaulted? Do you want or need a 9' basement? Is there a possibility of a walk-out – bring your grade certificate along to verify. Are you planning a two-storey, bi-level or bungalow? Do you prefer the standard 2x6 wall construction, or the insulated concrete form style for energy efficiency and long-term benefits? What about the new Built-Green construction methods – is that important? And what about resale – if you're planning to sell in a few years, you may need to put your own ideas aside in favor of what the general public is looking for.

MASTER SUITE

How big do you want your bedroom to be – first measure the space you have so you know what you are working with. Do you want a separate sitting area with a view – what about a covered deck? Do you want your room separated from the other bedrooms or in close proximity for small children? What type of closet do you want – a standard strip closet, his & hers closets, a walk-in closet, or dual walk-ins? Close to the ensuite?

ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS...

Spend time looking in plan books, magazines and the internet for neat ideas to consider. Take pictures of houses you admire - draw sketches of things you've seen. Visit showhomes, take a brochure, and make notes on it with things you liked and didn't like about the house. Keep it all together in a home design scrapbook, and bring this along when you meet with the designer you've chosen to pull these ideas together into your next house – this will be a handy reference tool for your meeting.

GREAT ROOM

Do you want a fireplace (natural gas or wood?) and location for a big-screen TV (if so, you need to plan ahead for furniture placement, as there are two focal points to consider). What about a higher ceiling height in this area? Is it open to the kitchen and eating area, or a separate space? Is there a view to take advantage of with some larger windows? Is there a need for storage (kids' toys, games, movies, blankets, etc.)?

ENSUITE

First, is an ensuite in the budget, or would you prefer to have one bathroom on that floor to share? What type of fixtures do you want – a tub/shower combination, a shower instead of a tub, a tub and separate shower? Do you want a corner tub? Is the shower made out of fiberglass for easy cleaning, or is it a tiled walk-in shower? One sink or two – one vanity or two? Should the toilet be in the room, or in its own room?