

NAHB Custom Home Builders Committee

How Custom Homebuilding is Changing

When you hear the word “custom” associated with the homebuilding industry, you probably think of a one-of-a kind home with everything you ever dreamed, right down to the door knobs, at a price reserved for people with large, six-figure incomes. At one time in home building history, that’s exactly what custom stood for. But things are changing.

Today, there are many different kinds of custom home options and different levels of custom home builders. There’s still the full-time, custom homebuilder who builds just a few homes each year — maybe only one. There are higher-volume builders who will customize a home by moving walls or adding square footage. There are even higher-volume builders who offer custom options in just a few areas of the home, such as kitchens with sunrooms, and kitchens as part of the family room.

Keep in mind that a custom feature is not the same as an optional feature. Options are usually standard features that are perceived as adding value, such as built-in cabinetry, granite countertops, crown molding, or finished basements. Custom features however, are very personal. What one homeowner likes another might hate. So the added value is literally in the eye of the beholder. This is one reason why most builders will ask for you to pay for custom features up front.

By expanding the definitions and boundaries of custom home building, builders have given homebuyers more opportunities to own build their dream homes without starting from scratch. To customize or not to customize hinges on two things – what you want and what you are willing to pay.