

ALLEANZA
CUSTOM HOMES

The Houston Custom Home Playbook

What it really costs. How long it really takes.
And the ten questions to ask any builder before you sign anything.

From the team behind 75 Houston custom homes · 5.0 stars across 68 reviews · Building since 2007

What a custom home really costs

The honest answer no builder likes to give in one sentence: **it depends on the lot, the layout, the size, and the features** — which is exactly why anyone quoting you a tidy per-square-foot number over the phone is guessing.

In Houston's close-in neighborhoods — the Inner Loop, Bellaire, West University, Meyerland — truly custom homes generally start around **\$1 million** and increase from there. That number moves with three things:

The lot	Size, drainage, trees, deed restrictions, and what has to be demolished or elevated. Two lots a street apart can carry six-figure differences in site cost.
The plan	Square footage matters less than complexity: rooflines, spans, windows, ceiling heights, and how much of the home is 'wet' (kitchens, baths, outdoor kitchens).
The selections	Appliances, stone, windows, flooring, fixtures. This is where identical floor plans end up \$300K apart — and where a disciplined process protects you.

Fixed-price or cost-plus?

These are the two honest ways to price a custom home, and a good builder offers both. **Fixed price:** one set number, with allowances for the decisions you haven't made yet — predictable, and the builder carries the risk. **Cost-plus:** you pay actual costs plus the builder's fee — more flexibility and transparency, and you benefit directly from savings. Neither is 'better'; they fit different owners. What matters is that your builder explains both, shows you the trade-offs, and lets you choose.

A useful early signal: ask how the design deposit works. A builder who credits it back to your project when you sign (at Alleanza it's \$5,000–\$10,000, fully credited) is investing alongside you, not selling plans.

The real timeline: 18 to 24 months

From the day you say 'build me a home' to the day you get the keys is about **18–24 months**. Anyone promising dramatically faster is either building semi-custom from a plan book, or planning to make it up on quality. Here's where the time actually goes:

Design & architecture	3–6 months	Surveys, the design questionnaire, choosing your architect, and iterating the plan while someone keeps the drawings tied to your budget — so you never fall in love with a house you can't build.
Engineering, permits & HOA	~3 months	Structural engineering, city permitting, and HOA approvals. Boring, procedural, and entirely the builder's job to run.
Construction	14–16 months	Foundation to keys. The best builders hold a steady, always-forward pace: too slow and crews lose focus; too fast and the work gets sloppy.

The three phases, from your side of the table

- 1 • Signing.** Talk about what you want, narrow the budget range, look at homes the builder has actually finished, and talk to their references. Then design begins with the architect who best understands you.
- 2 • Prepping.** Floor plan done, final price set, contract signed (fixed or cost-plus — your call). The builder handles engineering, city permits, and HOA approvals.
- 3 • Construction.** The build itself — and what happens after matters just as much: an open house, a 30–60 day inspection, a one-year inspection, and a warranty you can actually reach a human about.

Ten questions to ask any builder

1 • Are you truly custom, or semi-custom?

Semi-custom means a plan book, rigid spec lists, and expensive upgrades. Truly custom starts with your lot, a survey, and a blank page. Neither is wrong — but know which one you're buying.

2 • Fixed price or cost-plus — and will you explain both?

The answer you want is 'we offer both, here are the trade-offs, you choose.' A builder who only pushes one model is choosing for their risk profile, not yours.

3 • Can I talk to clients from three or more years ago?

Anyone can produce last month's happy client. Homes prove themselves over years — and so do builders. Ask how warranty items were handled long after closing.

4 • Who exactly will be on my job site?

Names, not roles. How many projects does each superintendent run at once? A small team with few simultaneous builds means more eyes on yours.

5 • How will I know what's happening every week?

'Call me anytime' is not a system. Look for scheduled updates, shared photos, and a written record — communication that happens by default, not on request.

6 • How do change orders work — in writing?

Every change should get a price and your signature before work happens. Surprises at the final invoice are a process failure, not bad luck.

7 • What happens when something goes wrong?

Something always does — a supplier delay, a failed inspection, weather. You're hiring how they respond. Ask for a real story, with dates.

8 • What does your warranty actually cover, for how long?

Get it in writing, and ask what happens in year three when something small breaks. The best answer is a builder who still picks up the phone. Alleanza backs every home with a lifetime guarantee — ask any builder to put their version on paper.

9 • How do you keep my selections on budget?

The design phase is where budgets quietly die. Someone should be tracking every decision against the number you agreed on — before, not after.

10 · Why do you do this?

Sit across the table and ask it straight. Builders who light up talking about clients and craft build differently than builders who talk only about square footage.

Green flags and red flags

GREEN FLAGS

- ✓ A+ BBB rating and a decade-plus of continuous operation
- ✓ Reviews spanning many years, mentioning the same team names
- ✓ References offered before you ask
- ✓ A written process with named phases and dates
- ✓ Both pricing models explained with trade-offs
- ✓ A communication system: scheduled updates, photos, a portal
- ✓ Design deposit credited to your build
- ✓ Inspections at 30–60 days and one year after move-in

RED FLAGS

- ✗ A company name that has changed more than once
- ✗ A handful of reviews, all from the last six months
- ✗ 'Our clients value their privacy'
- ✗ 'Every project is different' as an answer to everything
- ✗ Pressure toward one contract type without explanation
- ✗ 'Just call my cell'
- ✗ Plan fees that vanish if you walk
- ✗ Silence after the keys change hands

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Why Alleanza wrote this

Alleanza is an Italian word for **covenant**. We've been building custom homes in Houston since 2007 — through the 2008 downturn, Hurricane Harvey rebuilds, and 75 homes for 75 families — on a simple promise: we will do what we say we're going to do.

We wrote this guide because the questions in it are the ones we wish every family asked — of us, and of everyone else they interview. An informed client is our favorite kind.

2007

Building in Houston since

5.0 ★

across 68 Houzz reviews,
Best of Houzz 2014–2026

75

custom homes delivered

A+

Better Business Bureau

Ready to talk about your lot and your vision?

Call **713-898-7647** · info@alleanzacustomhomes.com · 1000 N Post Oak Rd #220, Houston, TX 77055

Start with a conversation — budget, lot, timeline. No pressure, no plan books.

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