



Columns supporting an attached carport match those at the home's entry, creating the illusion of more square footage.

Cut Costs—Not Corners

Save Money Before You Build

by Jason Miller

Scores of books go into great detail on how to save money during the building process. Among other tips, they suggest using recycled building materials, inexpensive finish appointments and energy-efficient appliances. But what can you do to protect your pocketbook while your home is still on paper—nothing more than a child of your imagination?

Brad Johnson, a member of the Minnesota Society of the American Institute of Building Design, says that careful attention to the design aspects of a pre-drawn home plan can save you some green before you first break ground.

“Pay attention to the exterior first,” he advises. “Strictly speaking, you should cut corners here. Choose a home plan without unnecessary jogs and angles, which add to your cost. There are very good designs on the market that have eliminated extraneous corners.” Because these homes have simplified truss and framing systems, they save you money from the start. Examine the floor plan. When it comes to the design's interior, there are myriad ways to keep your cash in your pocket. Take ceiling heights. Truss systems can be utilized to create tray or stepped ceilings, giving the effect of higher ceilings without building higher walls. If you love volume ceilings, look for two-story—or at least consistent—ceilings,

rather than staggered heights throughout a floor. “If you minimize the hoops your contractor must jump through, you'll pay less,” explains Johnson.



Plan L-444-VACA, www.homeplans.com

Builder: Landers Investments, Inc.

Want to make a petite home seem more spacious? If your design includes a porch, deck or other outdoor space, think of it as an extension of your living room!

Keep an eye out for floor plans that use “dead” (leftover) space smartly. Common solutions to this problem are niches, alcoves and storage spaces like cabinets and closets.

Want your living spaces to breathe? There are plenty of ways to accomplish this. Look for unobtrusive half-walls, which create interior vistas without adding extra framing costs. Generously spaced wood rails on staircases exude open-armed warmth. Speaking of staircases, it’s best to keep them as straight as possible. Straight-run stairs are easier to build than double-backs (U-shaped) or curved stairs. In the kitchen, island cabinets open up the room and connect it to adjoining areas—unlike

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overhead and upper cabinets, which tend to close off the space.

In addition to eye appeal, don’t forget what can’t be seen. Think mechanical. Start with plumbing. Does the plan you’re considering allow for plumbing runs to be shared; that is, are bathrooms situated back-to-back? This will save you money up front and in potential maintenance costs.

Finally, let there be light! Natural light, that is. With proper placement and types of windows, you’ll be surprised how small areas and dark spaces can come to life. Look for taller, single-unit windows that reach for the ceiling while the sill remains at the same distance from the floor. The result: more light, better views, marginal increase in price!

You’ve heard enough about saving money after you’ve broken ground. It’s time to save money before you build. Your contractor will thank you—and so will your pocketbook. 🏠

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Plan B-87157, www.homeplans.com



Builder: Steve Halley Homes

Two-story ceilings are just as dramatic as ceilings of varied heights, but they require neither walls with irregular plate heights nor unnecessary roofline jogs.

Plan APS-1717, www.homeplans.com



Photo by Leon Thompson/Homeplans, part of Move

Truss systems can be utilized to create stepped ceilings, giving the effect of higher ceilings without building higher walls.