



What's Selling in Custom Homes 2026

National · Texas · Dallas–Fort Worth — by Price Band & Size

What today's buyers value most across the country, Texas, and DFW.

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Executive Summary

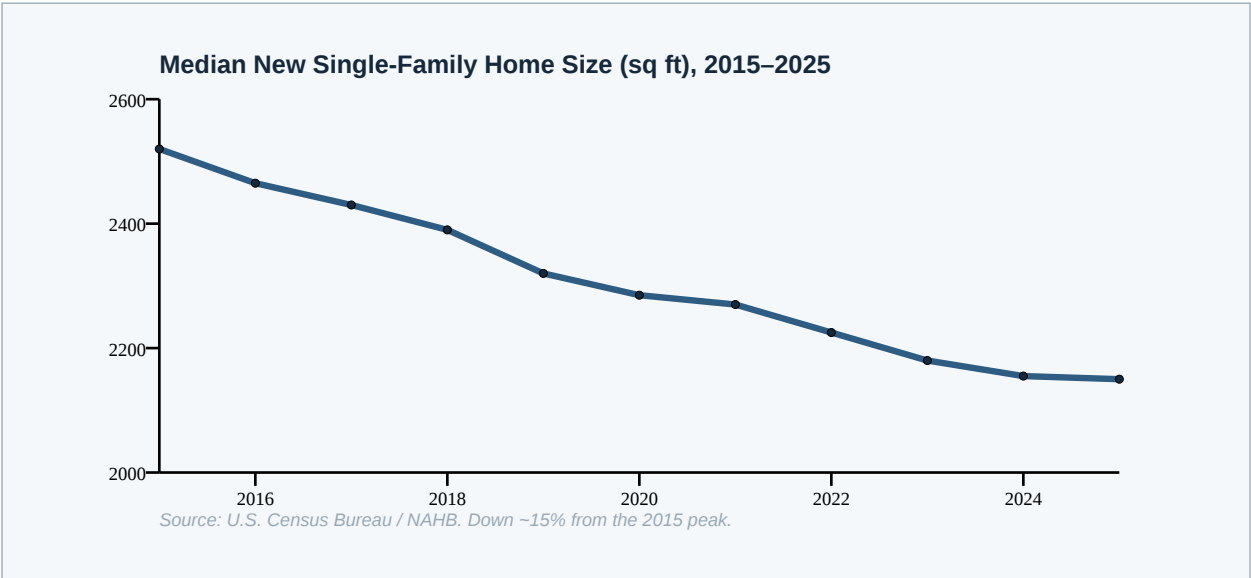
The through-line across every segment is consistent: buyers are paying for named, purposeful rooms and visible craft — not raw square footage. Median new-home size is essentially flat near 2,155 square feet while specialty rooms multiply. This brief maps what is selling across the full geography × price band × size matrix.

Sculleries, wellness rooms, flex spaces, casitas, and reading nooks (up 48% in Zillow listing mentions) are all rising. Bedroom counts are static while bathroom ratios and specialty-room counts increase with price band. Exteriors are rotating from white farmhouse toward warm brick, limestone, standing-seam metal, and craftsman-grade detail. The clearest price signal in the data belongs to **acoustic privacy**: homes with at least two acoustically private zones have been observed selling **4–6% above** strictly open-concept homes in the same ZIP code. Texas diverges from the national picture in three specific ways, detailed below.

1. Room Counts — What Is Actually Changing

CONFIDENCE HIGH

Median new single-family size held at 2,155 sq ft in 2025, essentially flat. Builders are adding flex and transition spaces — drop zones, multi-purpose rooms, EV charging — rather than bedrooms.



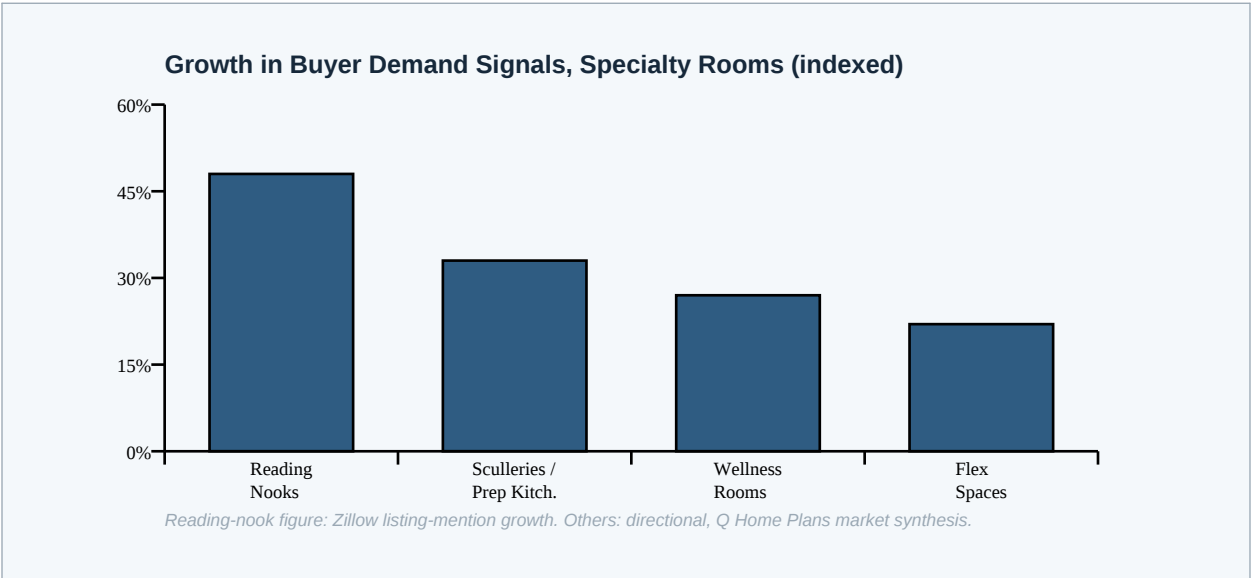
Tier	Beds / Baths	Named specialty rooms
Cost-efficient	3 bd / 2–2.5 ba	Flex room (office/guest/hobby), drop zone
Luxury	4–5 bd / 3.5–4.5 ba	Study, game, media, scullery — game & media still expected in TX
Ultra-luxury	5–6 bd / 6–8 ba	Wellness suite, golf sim, catering kitchen, casita

The real movement is specialization, not count: a 2026 plan sells on how many *purposes* it names, not how many bedrooms it lists.

2. New Room Types Selling Right Now

CONFIDENCE HIGH

- **Prep kitchen / scullery** — most-requested luxury kitchen feature nationally; migrating to mid-market as an outfitted walk-in pantry.
- **Wellness room** — sauna, cold plunge, meditation/massage; near-requirement at ultra-luxury and entering luxury plans as a named room.
- **Casita / multigen suite** — ~18–20% of Americans live multigenerationally; Texas SB 673 eased ADU permitting. Detached 400–800 sq ft casitas and main-floor suites with kitchenette and private entry.
- **Decompression mudroom** — a room, not a hallway: drop zone, charging, package locker, pet-wash, laundry adjacency.
- **Reading nook / digital-detox corner** — reading nooks appear 48% more often in Zillow listings than usual; a named 2026 trend.
- **Flex room in prime position** — no longer tucked away; placed next to main living and designed to pivot office/guest/hobby over the home's life.



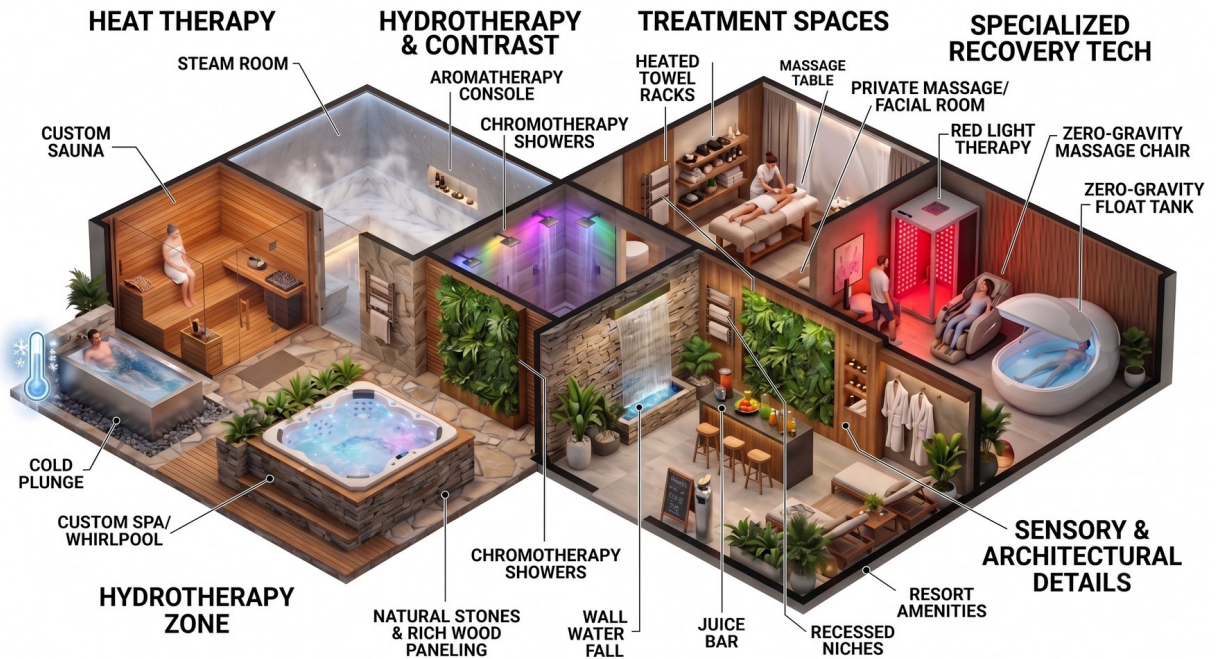
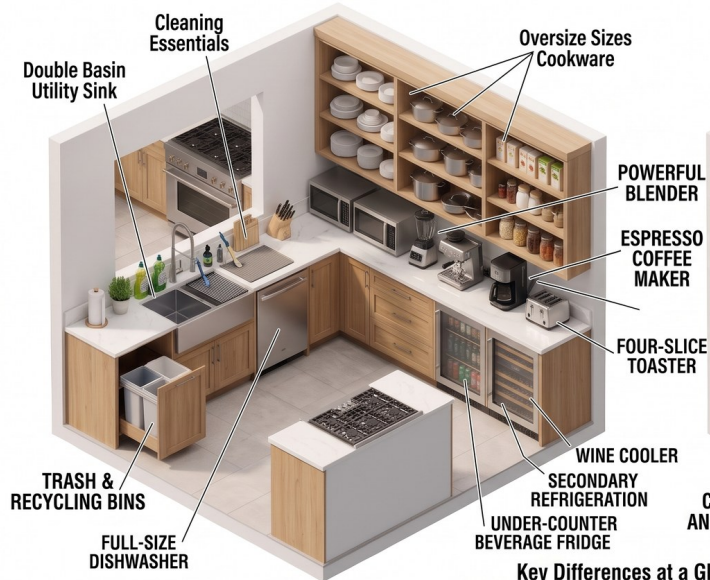


Figure. A full wellness suite broken into four zones: heat therapy, hydrotherapy and contrast, treatment, and specialized recovery technology.

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SCULLERY (PRIMARY FUNCTION: LABOR & HEAVY-DUTY COOKING)



PANTRY (PRIMARY FUNCTION: STORAGE & STAGING)



Key Differences at a Glance:
PRIMARY FUNCTION (Scullery: Labor | Pantry: Storage)
FEATURES (Fully Plumbed & Powered, Sinks, Ranges, Dishwashers | Shelving, Counttops, Outlets)
LOCATION (Scullery: Adjoins & Conceals Mess | Pantry: Directly Off Kitchen)

Figure. Scullery versus pantry — the distinction is function. A scullery is plumbed and powered for labor; a pantry stores and stages.

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3. Room Elements Buyers Are Paying For

CONFIDENCE HIGH

- **Cold plunge** — now a manufactured product category, spec-able as a plan callout rather than a one-off custom build.
- **Wet room** — the defining 2026 bathroom move: curbless walk-in shower plus freestanding tub in one tiled zone with a linear drain.
- **Infrared sauna, steam shower, multi-outlet showers** — rainfall plus body sprays plus handheld at luxury and above.
- **Appliance garages & hidden pantry doors; coffee/wine stations** turning the pantry into a social back-kitchen; **charging drawers and drop zones** at entries.
- **Window seats & built-in nooks, pocket offices, and zoned acoustics** (semi-open plans with quiet zones — doors are back).
- **Warm bath palettes** — oatmeal, taupe, clay, sage; grey-and-white spa bathrooms now read as dated.

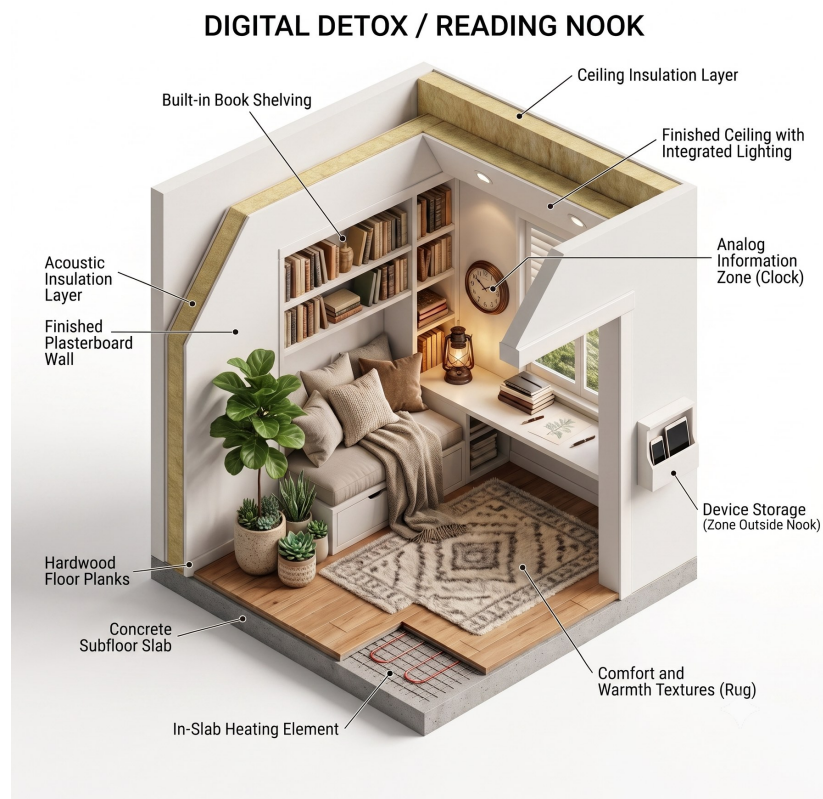


Figure. A dedicated quiet zone — acoustic insulation, in-slab heat, built-in shelving, and device storage deliberately located outside the nook.

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4. Program Features With Documented Demand

Where buyer evidence exists, not just design-press attention

CONFIDENCE HIGH

Four program moves carry measurable demand or price evidence rather than editorial enthusiasm alone. These are the ones most defensible in a listing or a plan pitch.

■ **Zoned openness / acoustic privacy** — homes with at least two acoustically private zones observed selling **4–6% above** strictly open-concept comparables in the same ZIP; “acoustic privacy” searches up roughly **40%**. Delivered through pocket doors, sliding partitions, half-walls, ceiling shifts, and level changes.

■ **The mudroom pet spa** — mudrooms rate essential or desirable with **80%+ of buyers** (NAHB); roughly **70% of U.S. households own a pet**. A tiled, elevated dog-wash with a high-arc sprayer installs for about **\$3,500–\$7,500**.

■ **The independent multigenerational wing** — approximately **17% of home purchases** now involve a multigenerational arrangement, a record high. Private entrance, kitchenette, dedicated living area, and invisible accessibility (zero-threshold showers, wider doorways, blocking for future grab bars).

■ **Dual primary suites** — two equally appointed primaries rather than a primary plus a secondary suite; parity is the selling point. Strongest in ultra-luxury, moving into luxury, usually with the second suite on the main floor.

Separately tracked as emerging rather than selling: biophilic cores (internal courtyards, living plant walls), the library-style office, and fully weatherized outdoor pavilions. All three show strong design-press and ultra-luxury adoption but limited transaction evidence at this stage; they are covered in the companion trends brief.

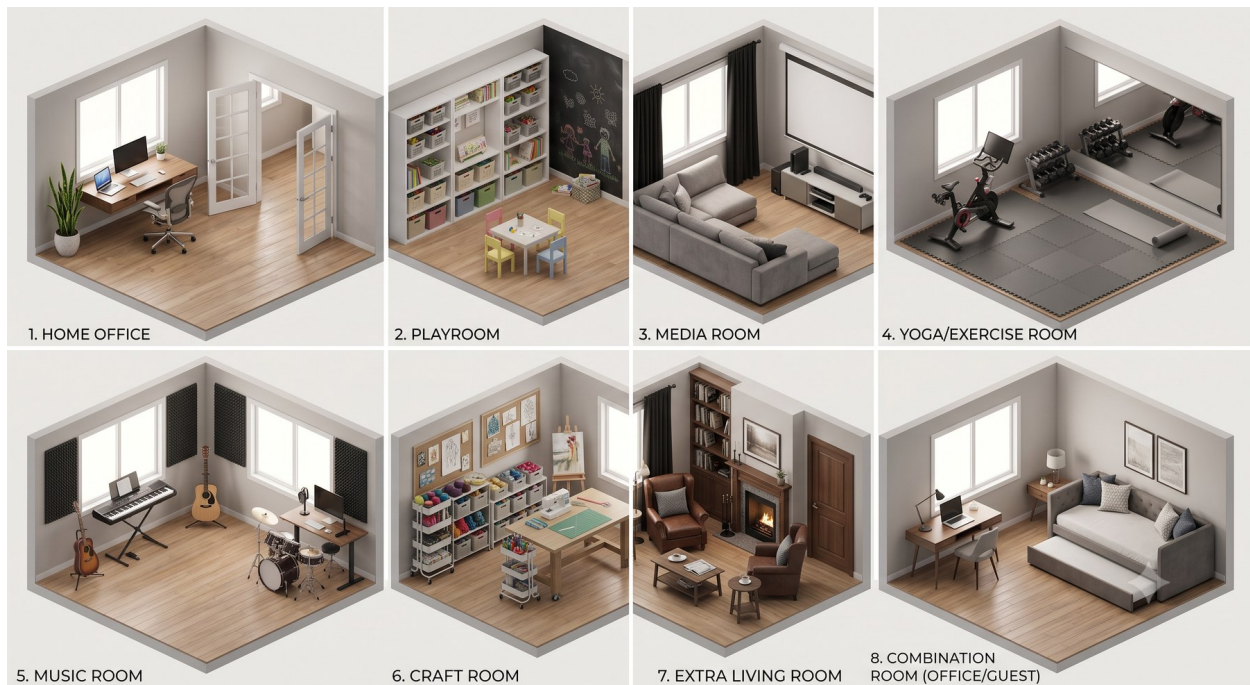


Figure. One flex room, eight documented uses. The demand signal is for the adaptable envelope — wiring, daylight, door and acoustic treatment — not for any single program.

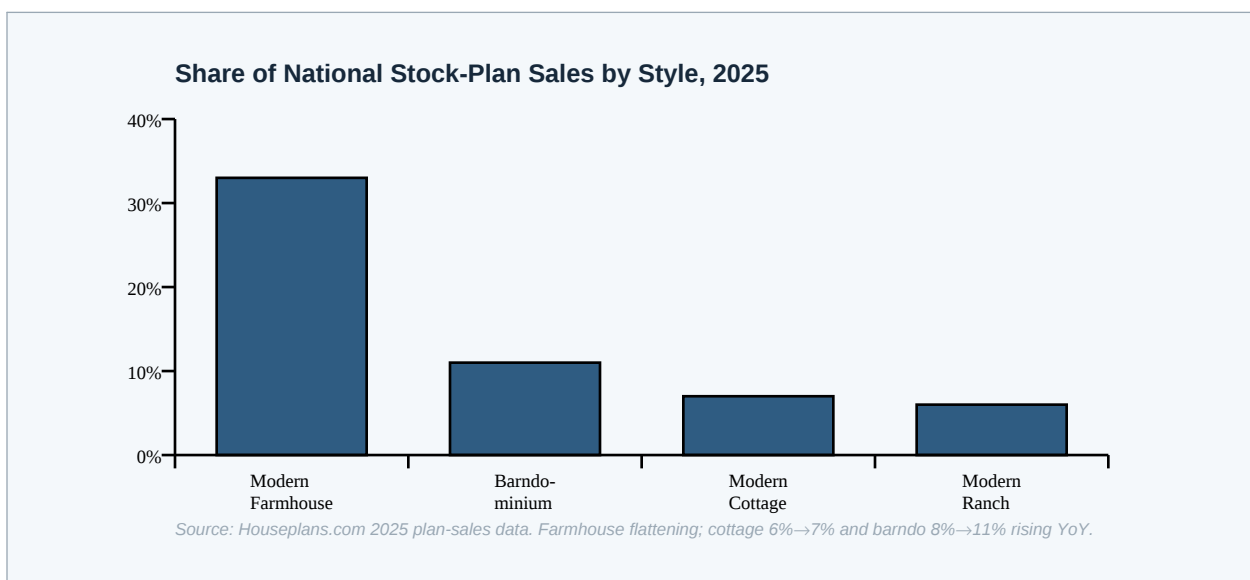
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Sources & method: Kukun 2026 zoned-living study; World Property Journal acoustic-design analysis; NAHB buyer-preference data; National Association of Realtors multigenerational purchase share; Own Luxury Homes dual-primary reporting.

5. Exterior Styles — What Is Selling Where

CONFIDENCE HIGH

National. Modern farmhouse is still #1 in stock-plan sales (~33%) but flattening; modern cottage is the rising successor; barndominium climbed from 8% to 11%; modern ranch is thriving alongside right-sizing.



Texas. Refined regionalism leads — local limestone, exposed timber, and standing-seam metal roofs ('Hill Country Modern'). Limestone slurry / over-grout finishes are the fastest-moving Texas masonry trend, replacing quarry-run rubble with a monolithic old-world look.

DFW. 'Modern heritage' (brick, refined trim, classic proportion, contemporary interiors) is the named custom look; transitional remains the volume seller in Southlake/Colleyville/Prosper. Painted brick is still strong but the national shift back to natural, shade-varied brick is arriving — expect painted brick to read 'dated' within 2–3 years.

6. Exterior Architectural Elements

CONFIDENCE MEDIUM

- **Detailed brickwork** — soldier courses, arches, corbeling, herringbone infill; natural varied brick over uniform paint.
- **Standing-seam metal roofs** — full roof at custom tier, porch/bay accent at production tier.
- **Exposed rafter tails & brackets**, tapered columns on stone piers — craftsman elements returning as farmhouse evolves.
- **Covered porches, dormers, shutters**, and pergolas/trellises extending outdoor rooms.
- **Steel & black window frames** — still selling but warming toward bronze and dark earth tones.
- **Warm exterior palettes** — browns, buffs, tans, sage-to-forest greens; stark white and grey fading.

EXTERNAL HOME DESIGN: WARM PALETTE

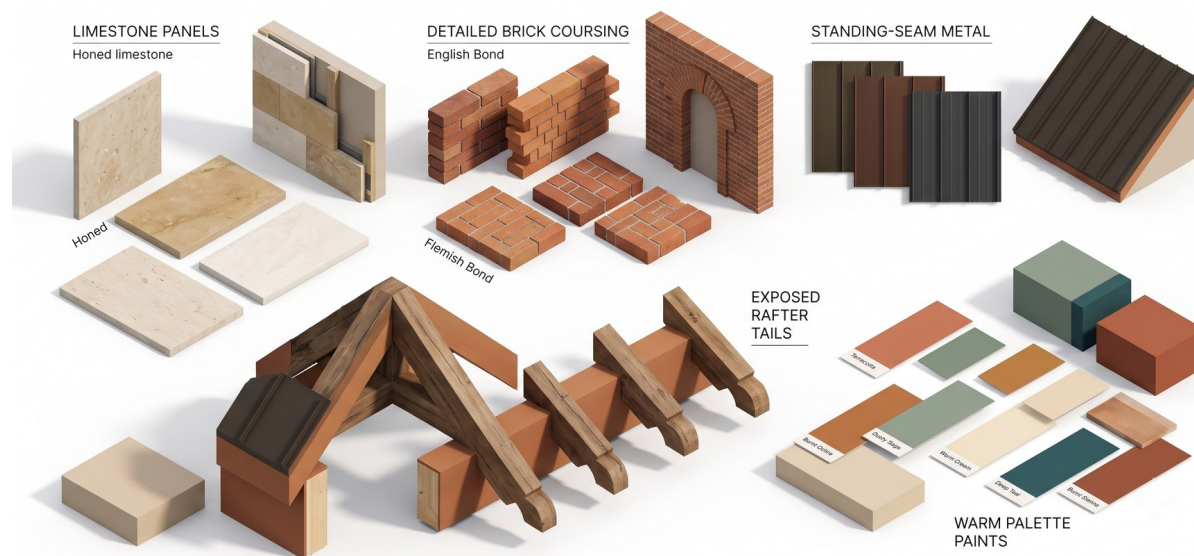


Figure. The warm-palette material set now displacing cool grays: honed limestone, detailed brick coursing, standing-seam metal, exposed rafter tails, and earth-toned paints.

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7. The Geography × Price Band Matrix

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What differentiates each segment nationally versus in Texas and DFW:

Segment	National baseline	Texas / DFW distinctive
Ultra-luxury	Wellness wing, golf sim, catering kitchen, dual primaries, glass wine walls	+ Outdoor living room with fireplace, pool standard, limestone, acreage structures; Preston Hollow / Westlake modern-heritage shells, sculptural stairs, sport courts
Luxury	Prep kitchen (hottest feature), wet-room bath, flex room in prime position, scullery-lite pantry	+ Game & media rooms still expected, metal-roof accents, covered-patio extension, multigen-suite option among top sellers
Cost-efficient	1,800–2,400 sq ft sweet spot, 3bd/2.5ba, flex room, EV-ready garage	+ Covered patio is the most-chosen structural option; LVP downstairs is table stakes (carpet homes sit 15–25 days longer); barndo entry plans

Condensed from the full size × geography × price-band matrix. "+" denotes a Texas/DFW addition to the national baseline.

Confidence & Methodology

High confidence: national plan-sales data (Houseplans.com), NAHB size and flex data, the Zillow reading-nook figure, and wellness/scullery demand and Texas limestone-and-metal regionalism.

Medium: DFW-specific option-selection claims (drawn from realtor and builder commentary rather than sales data) and the painted-brick timing call. The biggest gap remains actual DFW option-selection and plan-sales data by style. Next review: January 2027.

Sources & method: Houseplans.com Top 10 House Plan Trends 2026; NAHB 2026 press releases & Best in American Living Awards; KC Custom Homes (Hill Country 2026); US Brick; RL Remodeling & PlumbTile (2026 bath/wellness); Ideal Home (Zillow +48%); Luxury Home Marketing; The House Designers; Houzz galleries.

This brief was prepared for **Q Home Plans**, a residential architectural design firm serving Dallas–Fort Worth. Explore the interactive 2026 Design Guide and full house-plan library:

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