

CHIC LUXURY HOMES · JOHNSON COUNTY, KS

INSIDER'S RESOURCE

New Construction Buyer Checklist

Everything you need to ask, inspect, and negotiate before you sign — so you don't leave money, quality, or warranty coverage on the table.

- Pre-contract research questions for every builder
- Design center upgrade prioritization framework
- Construction phase inspection checkpoints
- Questions your builder won't volunteer answers to
- Closing walkthrough punch list template
- First-year warranty tracking calendar

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01

Before You Choose a Builder

The builder you choose determines your experience for the next 6–18 months and the quality of your home for decades. Do this research before you fall in love with a floor plan.

BUILDER VETTING

- Check BBB rating + complaint history**
Look for pattern of complaints, not just count
- Ask for 3–5 past buyer references (not builder-selected)**
Request owners of homes 2–3 years old — long enough to know quality
- Drive through completed communities after dark**
Deferred maintenance visible at 2–3 years = construction quality signal
- Research warranty claim response time**
Ask references: how fast did they respond to year-1 warranty issues?
- Verify builder's subcontractor relationships**
Frequent subcontractor turnover = inconsistent quality
- Confirm builder is licensed + bonded in Kansas**
Kansas Contractor Licensing Board: ksbtp.ks.gov

TIMELINE REALISM

- Ask for the builder's average completion time vs. quoted time**
Get this in writing from references, not sales rep
- Understand what triggers timeline extensions (and what doesn't)**
Weather, supply delays, buyer change orders — which are covered contractually?
- Map timeline against your rate lock expiration date**
Rate locks typically 60–90 days. Know your cushion.

LOT EVALUATION

- Request drainage survey / grading plan**
Low lots or backing to drainage easements = future headaches
- Identify all easements on the plat map**
Utility easements can restrict fencing, pools, decks
- Check orientation (sun exposure, neighbor sight lines)**
South-facing backyard = better solar gain + outdoor livability
- Research future phases — what gets built next to you?**
Phase 3 might be townhomes or commercial. Ask for the master plan.
- Assess backing — road, greenspace, future development?**
Backing a busy road reduces resale value by 5–15%

TARA'S RULE

Compare at least 3 communities before committing. Lot premiums, HOA fees, and included features vary enormously — even between communities by the same builder.

02

Contract & Design Center

Builder contracts are written entirely in the builder's favor. The design center is a profit center. Know both before you walk in.

CONTRACT REVIEW

- Have your Realtor (and ideally an attorney) review before signing**
Non-negotiable. Builder contracts are not standard forms.
- Understand earnest money terms — when is it non-refundable?**
Some builders take full deposit at contract; others at milestones
- Negotiate closing cost contributions before signing**
End-of-quarter and spec homes: builders often contribute \$10–25K
- Clarify what happens to your deposit if the build runs past your rate lock**
- Read the arbitration clause — do you waive your right to sue?**
- Understand change order costs before construction begins**
Post-start changes carry hefty premiums. Decide before dirt moves.

DESIGN CENTER STRATEGY

- Prioritize structural options first — they can't be added later**
Rough-in plumbing, extra windows, room additions, 3-car garage
- Upgrade hardwood floors on main level (strong resale ROI)**
Carpet is a \$3–8K post-close swap. Hardwood subfloor isn't.
- Choose quartz countertops over granite (durability + resale)**
- Add basement rough-in plumbing if not standard**
\$2–4K now vs. \$15K+ to add later. Highest ROI upgrade on this list.
- Skip cosmetic upgrades you can DIY post-close**
Light fixtures, cabinet hardware, paint — all easy \$500–2K swaps
- Get a full upgrade price list before your appointment**
Know your budget before you fall in love with the waterfall island

WATCH OUT

The design center is where buyers most often blow their budget on cosmetics and skip structural options they'll regret for years. Set a hard limit *before* you walk in.

03 During Construction

Most buyers check in once a month. Active buyers — and their Realtors — catch problems before they're hidden behind drywall.

PRE-DRYWALL WALKTHROUGH (CRITICAL)

- Hire an independent inspector for pre-drywall walk
Builder's inspector works for the builder. You need your own eyes.
- Verify all framing matches the approved plans
- Check plumbing rough-in locations (can't move after drywall)
- Confirm electrical panel location + outlet placement
Now is when to add outlets — not after walls close
- Inspect insulation coverage (walls, attic, rim joists)
- Document everything with photos and written notes
Date-stamped photos = leverage if disputes arise later

MILESTONE CHECK-INS

- Foundation pour + cure
- Framing complete
- Mechanical (HVAC, plumbing, electrical) rough-in
- Insulation + drywall hang
- Cabinet + flooring install
- 30 days before close: schedule independent final inspection

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR BUILDER REP MONTHLY

- 1** Are we on schedule for the original close date?
Ask for a written milestone update, not just verbal
- 2** Are there any material substitutions from what we selected?
Supply chain issues = swapped materials. You should approve changes.
- 3** Have any subcontractors been replaced on our build?
- 4** Are all permits current and posted on site?

TARA'S RULE

The pre-drywall inspection is the most important thing you'll do. Once the walls close, you're trusting what you can't see. Spend \$400 on an independent inspector. It's the best ROI on this list.

CONSTRUCTION NOTES

04

Final Walkthrough & Closing

Don't sign until everything on this list is either done or in writing with a completion date. Once you close, your leverage disappears.

INTERIOR

- All appliances installed and operational
- All fixtures working (lights, faucets, fans)
- HVAC heating and cooling tested in both modes
- All outlets and switches tested
Bring a phone charger to test every outlet
- Doors and windows open, close, lock properly
- Flooring installed per design center selections (no substitutions)
- Paint colors and finishes match selections
- Cabinets aligned, doors swing properly, hardware installed
- Countertops match selections, no chips or seam issues
- Plumbing — run all faucets, flush all toilets, check under sinks

EXTERIOR & MECHANICALS

- Grading slopes away from foundation (water drainage)
- Driveway, sidewalk, and landscaping complete per contract
- Garage door opens / closes / auto-reverses properly
- Exterior paint / siding complete with no gaps or damage
- Water heater installed and operational
- Certificate of Occupancy issued
Do not close without a CO. Period.

AT CLOSING — DOCUMENTS TO COLLECT

- Builder warranty documentation (written, dated, signed)
- All appliance manuals + warranty cards
- Paint colors + batch numbers for each room
You'll need these for touch-ups
- Completed punch list — signed by builder rep
- Builder's emergency contact + warranty claim process in writing

05 First Year: Warranty Tracking

Most structural defects surface in year one. Builder warranties are only useful if you document and claim them properly — and before they expire.

TYPICAL NEW CONSTRUCTION WARRANTY COVERAGE

- Workmanship & materials — 1 year**
Paint, drywall, trim, doors, fixtures, flooring installation
- Mechanical systems (HVAC, plumbing, electrical) — 2 years**
- Structural defects — 10 years**
Foundation, load-bearing walls, roof structure
- Appliances — manufacturer warranty (varies)**
Register every appliance within 30 days of close

MONTH 11 INSPECTION (BEFORE 1-YEAR WARRANTY EXPIRES)

- Schedule independent inspector at month 11**
One month before workmanship warranty expires — catch everything
- Document all drywall cracks, nail pops, door adjustments needed**
- Check all caulking — shower, tub, windows, exterior**
- Run HVAC full cycle — both heat and cool**
- Submit written warranty claim list to builder before day 365**

ISSUES TO WATCH FOR — FIRST YEAR

- **Drywall nail pops and hairline cracks**
Normal as house settles. Document and claim before year-1 expires.
- **Grading settlement — does water pool near foundation after rain?**
- **Sticky or misaligned doors (foundation settling)**
- **HVAC performance — is every room reaching set temperature?**
- **Caulking gaps in wet areas (mold risk if not addressed)**
- **Concrete cracking — driveway, sidewalk, garage floor**

PRO TIP

Keep a running photo log of any issues throughout year one. When you submit your warranty claim, photos with dates are far more effective than verbal descriptions.

WARRANTY CLAIM LOG

Ready to Buy New Construction in Johnson County?

I've guided buyers through dozens of new construction transactions across Overland Park, Leawood, Spring Hill, and Olathe. This checklist covers the basics — but every build is different, and the right representation makes the difference between a smooth process and an expensive lesson.

Let's talk before you sign anything.

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This checklist is provided for informational purposes. It is not a substitute for professional legal, construction, or financial advice. Every new construction transaction is unique — consult with your Realtor and relevant professionals for guidance specific to your situation.

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