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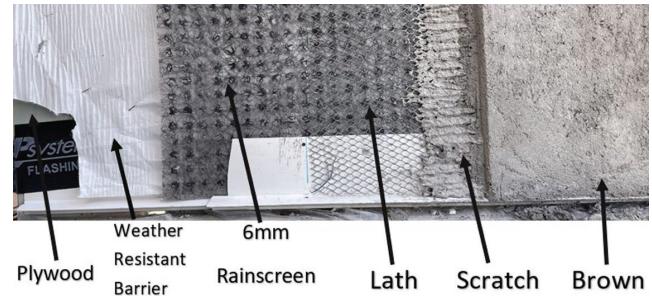
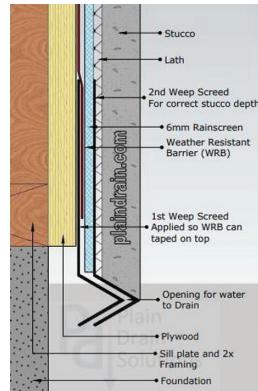
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PUBLISHER'S *note*

Giselle Bernard
Publisher

The Value of Keeping Your Word

In business, your word is your bond. Every promise sets an expectation, and those expectations form the foundation of trust. When a promise is made and not honored, the impact reaches far beyond a single transaction—it compromises credibility and weakens the relationship as a whole.

Customers don't simply buy products or services; they invest in confidence. They trust that what is promised will be delivered, and that trust is built through consistency. Showing up when you say you will, doing what you committed to do, and communicating clearly all reinforce reliability. When those standards slip, even once, doubt is introduced—and doubt is difficult to erase.

In competitive industries, trust is often the true differentiator. Many companies can offer similar pricing or comparable expertise, but far fewer consistently stand by their word. Integrity is what turns a one-time customer into a long-term partner. It's also why we are intentional about the vendors we choose to work with. The vendors we represent are not selected solely for the quality of their products or services, but for their proven commitment to accountability, follow-through, and ethical business practices. They do what they say they will do—especially when it matters most.

Honoring commitments also shapes company culture. When integrity is non-negotiable, it sets a standard internally and externally. Teams take pride in their work, customers feel respected, and relationships are strengthened over time. And when challenges arise—as they inevitably do—transparency and ownership preserve trust far more than excuses or silence.



Photo by Kraken Images

Standing by your word is not about being perfect; it's about being principled. Every promise carries weight, and every kept commitment reinforces credibility. By aligning ourselves with vendors who value integrity as much as we do, we ensure that trust remains at the center of every relationship we build.

From Client to Creator: How a Botched Project Birthed Patriot Custom Homes



By Jacob Dow

Most homeowners enter a construction project excited—and then slowly realize they don't know what's happening behind the scenes. Materials arrive, decisions are made without them, and they're left hoping someone is paying attention. In custom home building, mistakes rarely come from a lack of talent. They come from a lack of accountability—when no one is truly responsible for protecting the homeowner's vision, budget, and trust.

For Cody and Kristen Dawson, the founders of Patriot Custom Homes, this isn't just a philosophy; it was their reality. While many builders are born from a family trade, the Dawsons were the frustrated clients first.

The Defining Moment

The year was 2020, and like many families during the pandemic, the Dawsons decided to enhance their living space by hiring a contractor to build out their patio. With a professional background in the offshore oil and gas industry, Cody was naturally inclined toward logistical

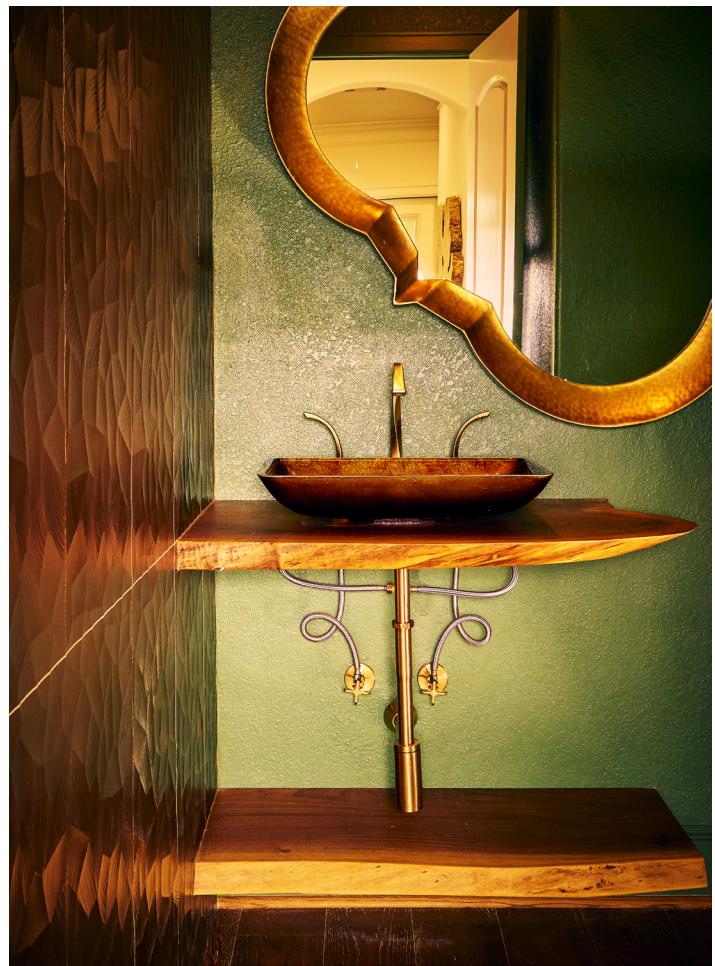
precision and oversight.

"I'm very involved with design and what we're looking for," Cody reflects on the process. However, the ease of the design phase vanished once materials began arriving at their doorstep. Cody's habit of verifying deliveries revealed a mounting list of errors—from the wrong doors to incorrect material for the patio ceiling. When Cody confronted the contractor, he was met with the very "tricks" and deflections that plague the industry. "I call up the contractor, let him know. He's all like, 'No, it's right, it's right,'" Cody recalls. That refusal to acknowledge a clear mistake became the catalyst for Patriot Custom Homes.

Award-Winning Precision

That experience solidified the Dawsons' philosophy: a builder should be a protector of the client's vision, not an obstacle to it. This commitment to excellence was recently recognized on a national stage. Patriot Custom Homes was

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honored to receive the Best in American Living™ Silver Award for their Cool Breeze project in Montgomery, Texas. This prestigious recognition saw the project move on to the Gold Award category at the International Builders' Show in Orlando, Florida a testament to the fact that their rigorous standards produce world-class results.

A Mission of Accountability

Today, Kristen leads business development and social media, acting as the vital liaison between homeowners and designers to ensure communication never breaks down. Meanwhile, Cody brings his offshore-bred discipline to the job site, vetting trades and managing schedules with a level of scrutiny that ensures materials are correct before they are ever installed.

By maintaining a hands-on presence, Cody and Kristen have built a company where the owners are involved in every job site visit and face-to-face meeting. They've traded the high-seas of oil and gas for the complex landscape of Houston custom building, proving that the best way to ensure a job is done right is to remember exactly how it feels when it's done wrong.

Today, every material delivery at Patriot Custom Homes is checked before it's installed. Every decision is documented. Every concern is addressed. Because Cody and Kristen remember exactly what it feels like to stand on the other side hoping someone is paying attention.

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GHBA Forecast Luncheon Recap - Jan 29th, 2026

By Greg Tomlinson

At the January 29, 2026 GHBA Forecast Luncheon, First American Financial Corp. economist Odeta Kushi described a housing market that is stabilizing and rebalancing—not retreating.

The U.S. economy is slowing under continued uncertainty.

Inflation remains above the Federal Reserve's target, particularly in services and housing, while unemployment is edging up from historically low levels. This dynamic is keeping monetary policy restrictive as payroll growth cools.

The labor market is settling into a “low hire, low fire” phase, with layoffs contained and unemployment claims stable. Texas continues to outperform the nation, and Houston's diversified job base provides added resilience.

Consumer spending has driven recent GDP growth, though rising credit card balances and delinquency rates—especially among younger households—signal growing financial strain.

Mortgage rates remain elevated, with industry consensus expecting rates to hover near 6 percent through 2026 and 2027. A return to pre-pandemic lows is unlikely.

Demographics remain supportive of long-term housing demand as millennials progress into homeownership and baby boomers gradually exit. Housing supply, however, remains structurally constrained. Nearly 79 percent of homeowners hold mortgage rates below 6 percent, limiting resale activity. National inventory remains tight, though Houston inventory sits roughly 12 percent above pre-pandemic levels, offering relatively more choice. New homes continue to represent a larger-than-normal share of available inventory.

Builders are adapting to affordability pressures by building smaller homes and increasing production below \$300,000. In Houston, new construction sales have moderated from pandemic highs, yet price growth continues to outpace national trends, driven by demand in the low- to mid-priced segments.

New construction remains challenged by labor shortages, tight credit, rising regulatory costs—now about 24



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percent of a new home's price—and elevated material costs. Single-family construction is pulling back even as some multifamily markets face oversupply.

Home prices are unlikely to retrace meaningfully, even as inventory rises. Insurance

costs across Southern states are adding to affordability pressures, though overall affordability is expected to improve gradually through 2026 as incomes rise, prices stabilize, and rates ease modestly.

The takeaway: the housing market is rebalancing, not crashing. Supply constraints persist, and Houston remains better positioned than many metros due to job diversity, healthier inventory levels, and an active new construction pipeline.



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Inspiring Kitchen And Bath Designs For The New Year!

Create Home Interiors That Resonate With Style

By Linda Jennings

Savvy kitchen and bath fixtures can transform even the most mundane space into something wonderful. The goal is to choose a product with the wow factor and then build the room design around it. This concept works for new construction or renovation, for all styles from modern to

classic, and for all designs in between. From a gorgeous soft pink toilet to a bath faucet inspired by watchmaking, these initial selections in the design process can set the tone for a space that is sure to offer years of enjoyment.



The Chrono Faucet from Ruvati

Design Time

The Chrono bath faucet collection from Ruvati was inspired by the precision of fine watchmaking; its handles transform the simple act of washing into a ritual of rhythm and form. Each twist of the handle feels intentional, much like winding a timepiece. The collection not only ensures effortless operation but also serves as a striking statement piece in any bathroom. Blending practicality with a stylish flair, Chrono is perfect for those who appreciate the harmony of engineering and artistry, making it an ideal choice for specifiers and homeowners alike seeking sophistication in their fixtures. Crafted from durable brass, these tall vessel faucets are built to last and available in two spot-free finishes: a stunning brushed gold and sleek brushed nickel. Discover more at ruvati.com.

Blushing Toilet

Bring luxury, personality, and smart design into your bath with a VAST Studio Custom Intelligent Toilet in their blush pink. Part of the brand's Small Batch Series the concrete, modern toilet features brass accents and advanced features.



Vast Studio Toilet in Blush

VAST Studio elevates the concept of a "toilet" from a basic necessity to a significant, handcrafted design element in a luxury bathroom. From their patent-pending concrete textures to the refined intelligent features, this is more than a toilet... it's functional art. A new chapter in design excellence, VAST Studio elevates concrete into sculptural luxury fixtures — refined, resilient, and unmistakably modern. Discover the entire collection of luxury bath products at vaststudio.com.

Perfectly Professional

The Professio-S dual spray professional kitchen Faucet from Flusso Kitchen & Bath is the ultimate choice for home chefs. Crafted from solid stainless steel, this faucet combines practicality with modern style, featuring an 18" pull-out sprayer reach, a 1.8 GPM flow rate, and a rotatable spout to handle tough kitchen tasks with ease. Add a Touch Sensitive Solenoid Box to Professio-S for easy one-touch-on/off operation. The Professio-S is available in standard,

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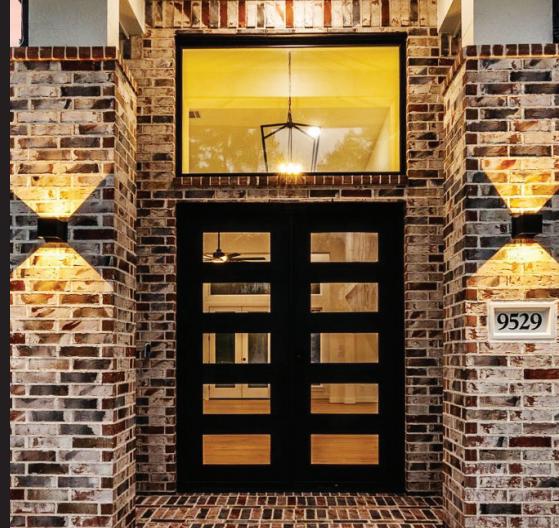


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Professio-S Kitchen Faucet by Flusso Kitchen & Bath

Continued from page 9

fast ship finishes of Stainless Steel, Matte Black, and Polished Steel. Flusso also offers 20 colorful ceramic-based, oven-cured finish options in shades ranging from sky blue, leaf green, and deep red to more neutral options like distressed black, steel grey, and white. For more information about Professio and other Flusso Kitchen & Bath designs, visit flussofaucets.com.



Fireclay Tile's Foundry Bath Collection

Bathe Better

Fireclay Bath marks a natural evolution for Fireclay Tile, expanding its commitment to American craftsmanship into a new category - Bath. The Foundry Bath Collection, shown here, celebrates raw materials, honest craftsmanship, and timeless design with the soft forms of industry-first ceramic knob handles finished in the glaze of your choice. Four new bath collections were recently launched, each with its own proprietary glazes and metal finishes, that are designed to complement one another. The collection was built to shake up the plumbing industry with the same integrity and serviceability Fireclay proved through tile.

With 16 glazes, 16 metal finishes, and four complementary collections, the palette mixes seamlessly, right down to a sculptural, sensory handle. This new Bath Collection combines the raw beauty of metal with the expressive character of handcrafted ceramic. Discover the entire collection at fireclaytile.com.



Diamond Spas Fraser cold plunge pool

Quality And Craftsmanship

Bello offers a wide collection of finely crafted luxury bathtubs, vanities, LED mirrors, medicine cabinets and toilets. The Bello brand is built on the belief that beauty and functionality should seamlessly coexist to elevate the bathroom experience. Its popular Flutello bathtub features the timeless elegance of fluted architectural elements, easy installation, and a color-matched drain assembly. Measuring 67" x 30" x 24", it is crafted from durable Bellocast, a naturally slip-resistant surface for a rejuvenating soak. The material is a high-quality innovative composite material so it is water, grease and stain resistant, it is easy to clean and requires little maintenance. Its natural insulating properties keep bath water warmer longer. Enjoy peace of mind and effortless upkeep with Bello products, see the entire collection at bellousa.com.

To find out more about the brands featured here visit their websites at:

ruvati.com • vaststudio.com • flussofaucets.com
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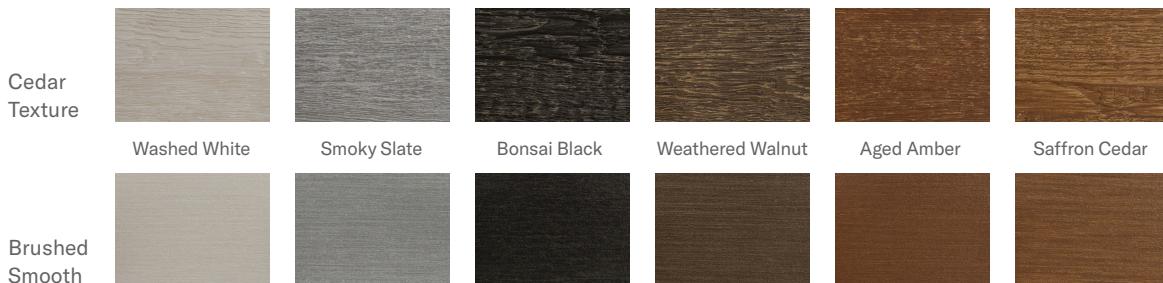
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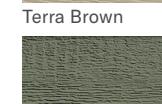
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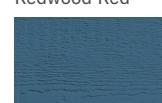
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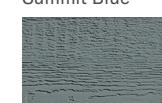
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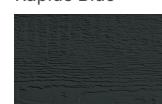
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Build It Right the First Time:



The Uncompromising Standards of Casa Bella Development

By Jacob Dow

In the high-stakes world of Houston's custom home market, where residences in Afton Oaks, Tanglewood, and the Memorial Villages command price points up to \$5 million, the margin for error is non-existent. For Joseph Licata, owner of Casa Bella Development, the secret to navigating this landscape isn't found in high-volume production, but in a singular, inherited mantra: "Build it right the first time".

A Foundation of Artisanship

Licata views construction through the lens of a craftsman rather than a developer. This philosophy is a direct tribute to his grandfather, Robert Vergara, a home builder who taught him that quality is rooted in care and patience.

"Take your care, take your time, do it right the first time," Licata insists. This approach manifests in what he describes

as "timeless elegance"—a blend of old-world craft and modern sophistication. To achieve this, Licata eschews the traditional "subcontractor"

model, choosing instead to work with "partners"—many of whom have been by his side for over 15 years. These tradespeople, including artisans skilled in intricate tile and stone fabrication, bring a level of pride to the job site that is palpable in the finished work. All while trim carpenters provide custom architectural detail and functionality to the home.

Blending Tradition with Technology

While the aesthetic of a Casa Bella home leans toward the enduring and the artisanal, the "bones" of the structure are strictly forward-thinking. Licata recognizes that Houston's



humid climate and unpredictable weather demands more than just beauty; it requires strategic engineering.

When utilizing modern spray foam insulation, Casa Bella thoughtfully integrates humidity and smart climate controls to ensure the home remains a comfortable sanctuary for generations. “I want the home to be timeless and forward-thinking at the same time,” Licata says, noting that he prefers to not sacrifice the “warmth” of a home for the sake of technology alone.

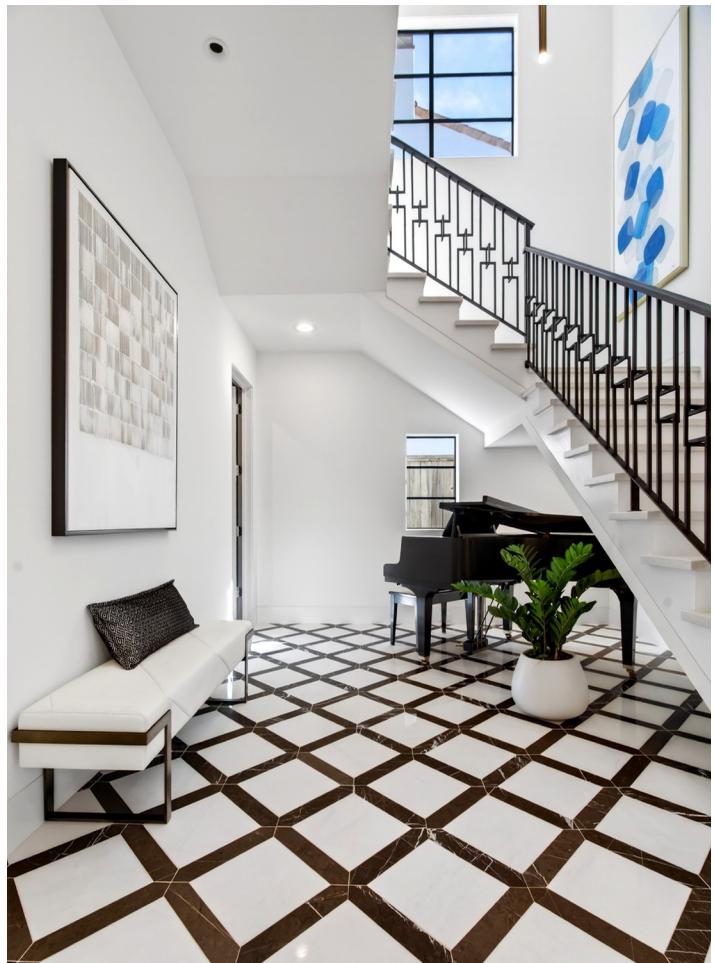
The Granular Custom Experience

The “Build it Right” philosophy extends beyond structural integrity to the deeply personal details that make a house a home. For Licata, doing it right means listening until he understands exactly how a family lives.

This meticulous attention to detail has resulted in highly specialized features, such as:

- **Connoisseur-Grade Wine Rooms:** For clients in the industry, Casa Bella designs sophisticated, temperature-controlled wine rooms featuring custom tasting tables and curated displays that serve as both storage and a centerpiece for entertaining.
- **Performance Wellness Centers:** Moving beyond the standard home gym, Licata crafts dedicated casitas that

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serve as private spas—complete with professional-grade fitness equipment, dry saunas, cold plunges, and walk-in showers.

* **Dual-Kitchen Functionality:** To facilitate seamless entertaining, homes often feature a secondary “catering” or “dirty” kitchen. This allows staff or caterers to prep and clean behind the scenes while the primary kitchen remains a pristine gathering space for guests.

Integrity in the Face of Obstacles

Construction in Houston is rarely without challenges, from complex permitting to unpredictable storms. However, Licata’s commitment to his core principle ensures that even when setbacks strike—such as a delivery truck carrying custom windows crashing in a mountain snowstorm—the

standards never slip.

By maintaining open lines of communication and pivoting to other areas of the project like drainage or pool construction, Licata ensures that “lost days” are minimized without ever cutting corners on the final product. It is the result of a simple promise kept: it was built right, the very first time.

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One Vision, One Team: Architecture and Interior Design Working Together From Start to Finish



By Lesley Bercegeay

In an industry where architects and interior designers often remain separate, Allison Nicole and Javier Medina stand out for their fully integrated approach. They believe strongly that the most successful homes result when architecture and interior design are united from the outset. Their partnership ensures clients receive a seamless process that blends creativity and structure, beauty and function, and vision and execution.

Allison Nicole is recognized for her refined eye, intuitive sensibility, and ability to translate a client's personality into spaces that feel intentional and deeply personal. For her, interior design has always been about more than aesthetics, it's about emotion. From an early age, Allison was fascinated by how thoughtfully designed spaces influence daily life, shape mood, and create comfort. She believes a home should function as a sanctuary, a place where clients can unwind, recharge, and feel truly at ease.

Javier Medina, Principal Architect at Ideo Architects,

brings a complementary perspective rooted in balance and precision. Influenced by his mother's artistic sensibility and his father's engineering mindset, Javier developed an early appreciation for both creativity and structure. His architectural training and extensive travel exposed him to a wide range of styles, climates, and building traditions, reinforcing his belief that good design must respond not only to the homeowner but also to the surrounding environment. Landscape, views, climate, and sustainability are integral to his work.

Individually, Allison and Javier bring depth and expertise to their disciplines. Together, they guide clients through every phase of building or remodeling, connecting homeowners with trusted builders to ensure continuity, communication, and quality from concept to completion.

The design and construction industries have evolved dramatically over the years, and both professionals embrace that change. Advancements in materials, products, and



technology have reshaped how homes are designed and lived in. Smart home systems now seamlessly integrate efficiency and convenience without compromising aesthetics. Modern homes must support how families live today, adapting to lifestyles that didn't exist even a decade ago.

On the architectural side, ongoing updates to building codes, construction methods, and exterior materials require constant learning and adaptability. Sustainability and safety are no longer optional, they are foundational. For Allison and Javier, these shifts represent opportunity rather than challenge. Their focus is on balancing innovation with restraint, ensuring that technology enhances the home rather than overwhelming it.

Collaboration drives their entire process. Whether designing a custom home or handling a renovation, Allison and Javier believe only a unified architect, designer, and builder team delivers the best result. Open communication through regular meetings, walkthroughs, and dialogue keeps projects aligned, minimizes misunderstandings, and helps avoid surprises.

Organization is equally critical. Allison brings clarity to the selection process, managing finishes, materials, and bids with careful attention to aesthetics, budget, and timeline.

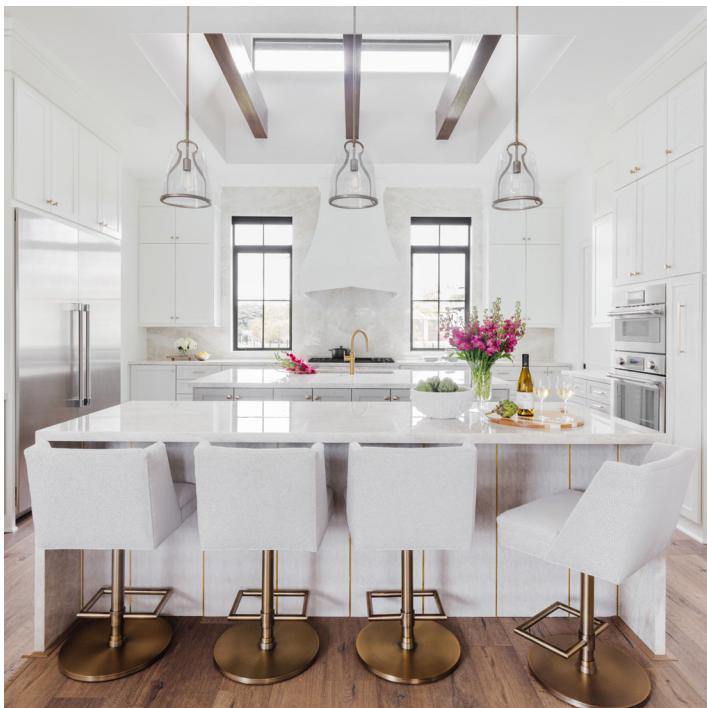
Her ability to streamline decisions allows clients to move forward confidently. Javier ensures architectural intent, engineering requirements, and long-term performance are fully integrated into those decisions. This combined expertise helps clients avoid pitfalls, anticipate challenges, and achieve efficient, harmonious results.

What truly differentiates Allison and Javier is their close collaboration from day one. Clients aren't hiring a designer and architect working independently, they are gaining a fully aligned team with a shared vision. Allison is particularly intentional about honoring a home's original structure during renovations, preserving character and authenticity so new design elements feel like a natural evolution rather than a departure from the past.

Javier reinforces that approach through architectural clarity and thoughtful problem-solving. When challenges arise, as they inevitably do, clients know they are being addressed collaboratively. That shared accountability builds trust and creates a sense of calm, even when decisions become complex.

One of the most consistent challenges they face is client education. Many homeowners enter the process with

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expectations shaped by home improvement shows, where timelines are compressed and budgets oversimplified. In reality, construction and design require patience, sequencing, and thoughtful planning. Materials cannot be installed before conditions are right, and rushed decisions often lead to costly consequences.

Wood flooring, for example, must properly acclimate with HVAC systems fully operational before installation; an often-overlooked step with long-term implications. More recently, AI-generated plans and images have added another layer of complexity. While helpful for inspiration, these tools often produce designs that are impractical, non-compliant, or unsuitable for real-world construction.

Guiding clients through these realities is a critical part of their role. Through honest communication and realistic expectations, they bridge the gap between inspiration and execution, helping clients make informed decisions.

The materials selection process begins long before samples are chosen. Javier evaluates the home's architectural style and its relationship to the surrounding landscape, as well as the client's inspirational imagery. Allison then conducts an in-depth consultation to understand the desired atmosphere; how the home should feel, function, and support daily life.

For Allison, flooring serves as the foundation. Once selected, cabinetry, countertops, fixtures, and finishes naturally follow. This layered, methodical approach ensures cohesion while allowing flexibility and personalization.

Avoiding common missteps early is another priority. One of the biggest mistakes homeowners and builders make is

discussing pricing before plans and selections are finalized. Without a defined scope, early estimates often reflect partial costs and create unrealistic expectations. Accurate pricing requires completed plans, material selections, and engineering considerations. Doing this work upfront minimizes surprises and keeps projects running smoothly.

While staying current with trends is important, neither Allison nor Javier designs solely around trends. Allison stays informed through markets and digital platforms, while Javier maintains continuing education to remain current with construction methods and regulations. Their shared goal is to create homes that function as flexible canvases—spaces that evolve with homeowners rather than feeling dated over time.

Their personal styles reflect that philosophy. Allison's aesthetic leans nostalgic, blending old and new to create warmth and lived-in character. Javier's approach emphasizes simplicity, balance, and purposeful form inspired by timeless modern principles. Together, those influences create spaces that feel layered, intentional, and enduring.

They are also united by a fascination with texture and light. Allison uses texture to add depth and warmth through surfaces, finishes, and furnishings. Javier focuses on how light interacts with materials throughout the day, shaping perception and mood. When balanced thoughtfully, texture and light create homes that feel dynamic, inviting, and alive.

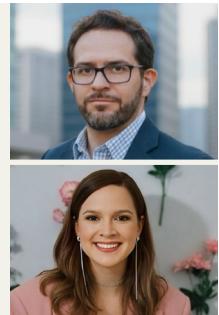
When asked where homeowners should begin, Allison's advice is clear: align on a realistic budget from the start. Differences in expectations can quickly derail a project if left unresolved. Javier adds that timelines are just as critical. Aligning architects, designers, and builders on key milestones ensures that design, construction, and delivery move forward together.

For Allison Nicole and Javier Medina, great homes start with a strong team and unified vision. Their process is built on open communication, shared goals, and careful planning, transforming complex projects into rewarding journeys. They guide clients with expertise and integrity, ensuring design and architecture are seamlessly aligned from concept to completion.

For more information contact

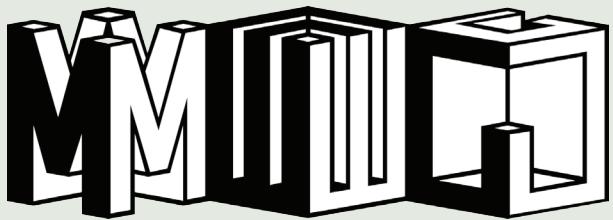
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