



# INSPIRATION REPORT

ISSUE 26  
SUMMER 2020

## Stock vs. Custom Plans: Which is More Effective for Hybrid Timber Framing?



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# Stock vs. Custom Plans: Which is More Effective for Hybrid Timber Framing?

## FEATURED STORY



BY TAYLOR MECKLING  
ATF DESIGNER

So you've considered all your options and looked deep within and you are positive - your new home is to be a timber frame home. Firstly, congratulations! But, now what? Where do you begin? At the heart of planning for any home is the floor plan. The way in which you will interact with your home is paramount to your emotional well being and lifestyle you wish to harbor for your residency.

There are loads of resources available online when trying to find floor plans. You can pick from a dozen similar floor plan catalog sites dedicated exclusively to selling plans and prints for a fee. There is of course social media like Pinterest, and Instagram, where you can follow specific firms or persons, work that they share publicly across their channels. You may go straight to the source and track down a local home builder or architect for their work.

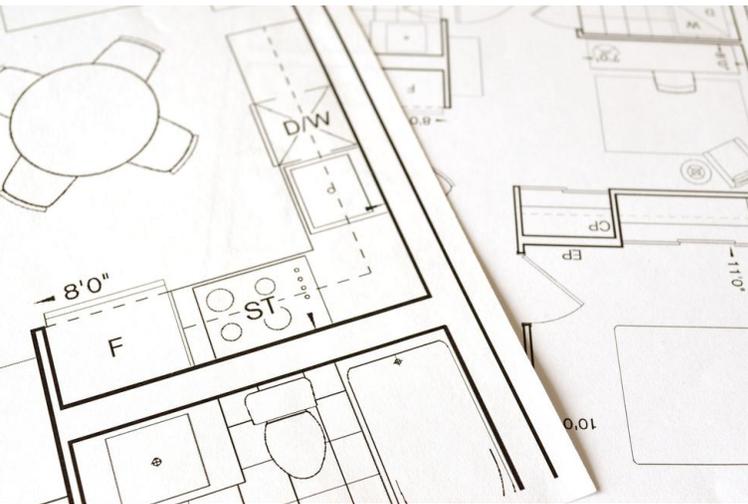
There is, of course, the option to grab the nearest pencil and start scratching out your own vision of a floor plan. These days, there are even a few apps for that very purpose.

Everything mentioned so far is great in the early stages of the process. The mind is like a sponge absorbing a myriad of ideas as the stones are turned over. **You'll soon realize that you're finding more ideas that you dislike than like.** At this point, the project scope narrows and it's time to get serious. Eventually, you are going to realize that you've either discovered

"People who build their own home tend to be very courageous. These people are curious about life. They're thinking about what it means to live in a house, rather than just buying a commodity and making it work."

- TOM KUNDIG  
PNW ARCHITECT

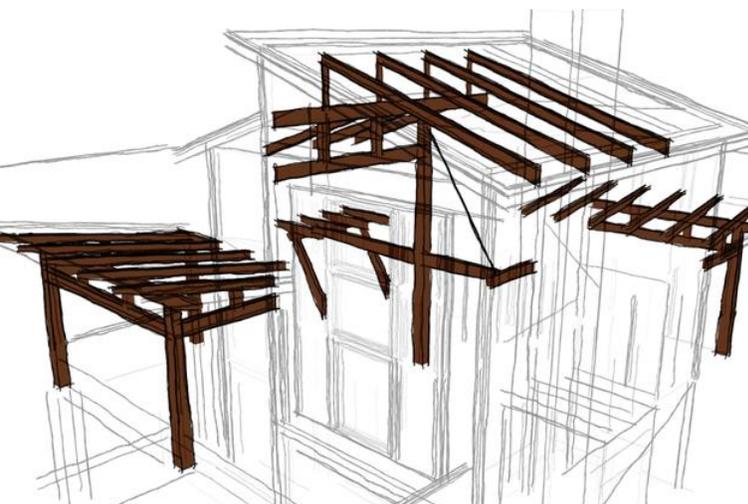




Stock plans are typically very polished drawings that are typically vetted by industry professionals.



A computer render is usually provided for stock plans so the client can confidently visualize the home in 3D.



An "x-ray" perspective shows the hybrid timber frame make up the bones of this dynamic modern home.

your ideal floor plan through your search or have come across a few really good concepts but none are hitting the sweet spot. This leads to a very important topic of discussion. Do you run with the stock plan, modify a stock plan, or decide that none of the stock plans are really satisfactory. Maybe your best option is to develop a fully custom plan.

Let's break down these options into something tangible.

## Stock Plans

At face value, the simplest and most accessible options are the stock plans available at any of hundreds of websites and home builders across the web. Though the process of searching can be laborious, there is almost always something out there that will check most of the boxes.

The ready-made nature of stock plans can be alluring. It's simpler and often quicker to pick from a number of different polished end product configurations that have most likely been built by others. This typically comes with the auxiliary benefit of naturally vetting itself. These plans incorporate many time tested characteristics that designers have found work for a broad range of customers. Furthermore, there is a high chance that the plan you are looking to build has already been built, allaying potential concerns about structural or functional qualities inherent in the design.

The low price of these plans is potentially the most attractive selling point. This is the case because the plans were most likely designed specifically to entice a wide audience. The plan is intended to be sold repeatedly, meaning that some savings are then passed on to customers because the cost is distributed among many "owners" of this set. This may be a non-starter for those with discerning tastes, some won't have a problem with the idea that their home isn't entirely unique.

**There is one major hindrance that affects the majority of off the shelf plans - codes.** These plans are often designed to a very general structural specification that won't meet most local building codes. A local engineer or designer will have to be employed to make modifications to make the home compliant with your local building requirements. Beware that this can sometimes change

the aesthetics of the design in unintentional and unexpected ways. These services will cost an amount that is dependent on how significantly the plans need to be altered.

Perhaps the biggest potential disadvantage when considering stock plans is **the lack of options that incorporate timber elements**. There is of course plenty that do, however, the designs may leave a lot to be desired. This isn't the end of the world. In both scenarios, a competent timber frame company that aligns with your stylistic inclinations will be able to generate a solution. This approach will involve making more decisions, time, and money, but typically still much less than working from scratch.

## TAKING STOCK

Top takeaways from searching for a stock plan to build your new home.

### PROS

- Lowest cost
- Bountiful curated concepts
- Zero lead time
- Usually, time tested
- No stressful decisions

### CONS

- Usually compromised room configurations
- Typically won't satisfy local codes or neighborhood stipulations
- Either unmodifiable or costly to edit
- Almost never consider timber elements



## Custom Plans

So, you've roamed the web and talked to all the local builders and you still aren't satisfied with the options that have been set before you. Perhaps you knew right away that your needs were only going to be satisfied if you set the program and made all the decisions from scratch. Well, now we're looking at the top shelf of the residential planning world - a custom home plan.

Early in this process, you'll seek out a design professional that understands what you're all about. There will likely be multiple interviews where you and a designer will try to communicate your vision into something tangible.

This is often a laborious venture and will require patience to allow the process to yield the best results possible. There will be times during which you will feel overwhelmed and weary of all the decisions. Some will actually enjoy this more, but by and large, it helps to be aware of the gravity of the exercise. **The extra effort is worth its weight in gold when considering that you'll get to appreciate those tailor-made solutions day after day.**

This route requires a heftier investment upfront to draft your specific vision. This will seem intuitive to most people, but there are a few things to consider in the long term. A stock plan will obviously be much cheaper initially, but some design services will likely always need to be contracted unless the codes of your local jurisdiction are extremely lax. When devising a custom plan, these codes are taken into consideration from the very start, as well as any rules or regulations mandated by an HOA.



The final consideration to figure for has to do specifically with the timber frame. A custom plan is going to afford the maximum amount of flexibility when considering your timber aesthetic preferences. Some stock plans may allow for more latitude when designing a timber plan than others. **Custom plans can incorporate the timbers in a holistic manner**, whereas a stock plan may require ad hoc resolutions, or is limited by key structural areas. Every trick in the book is at your disposal from the beginning when considering the style and frequency that the timbers will be represented in your home.

## T A I L O R M A D E

Major considerations for pursuing a custom design services for your new home.

### P R O S

- All needs and desires are addressed
- “Out-of-the-box” solutions
- Designed with site and codes in mind

### C O N S

- Decisions can be overwhelming
- Iterative changes and tweaks take time
- Initial cost is higher

## Which is right for you?

Ultimately, you and yours are going to be your own best advocates coming to this conclusion. There are several key considerations that we’ve outlined to make this a less cumbersome decision. Obviously, there are unique circumstances that won’t fall neatly into one of the prescribed categories that may require extra reflection. We encourage you to talk to friends, family, and of course, timber framers like ourselves to see if adequate accommodations can be made for your special case.

Though it is a big life leap, building your ideal timber frame home should be a fun and collaborative experience. **The time spent planning, gathering info, and considering these options will help to galvanize your vision** for the upcoming steps in the building process.



Regardless of which option you believe will best serve you, the team at Arrow Timber is capable of working with you to produce the beautiful timber home that you’ve always aspired toward. We’ve spent the past decade working with hundreds of clients that have come to us following either of these paths. We understand that everyone has their own preferences and we have become adept over the years to provide a flexible design process that works for you just the same.

Your satisfaction is paramount to us. It’s what we strive for. Once we’re on your team, we work tirelessly until you are happy with your project. It’s embedded in our DNA and our core values as a company, that we won’t stop until you are happy.

**You are the visionary behind your timber framing project.** You control the product decisions, the hiring choices, and the budget and timeline restraints. Our new book, *The Art of Hybrid Timber Framing*, explains how understanding your vision is key to achieving your building goals. Visit us at [arrowtimber.com](http://arrowtimber.com) to preview the great content in this International Top-Ranked Amazon E-Book! While you’re there, check out our gallery of gorgeous post and beam projects. Do you see anything that sparks your interest? Come by for a shop tour, or give a call and chat about your project. We are always thrilled to hear about our customers’ visions for Timber Living!

On behalf of the ATF team,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bert".

Bert Sarkkinen, Owner

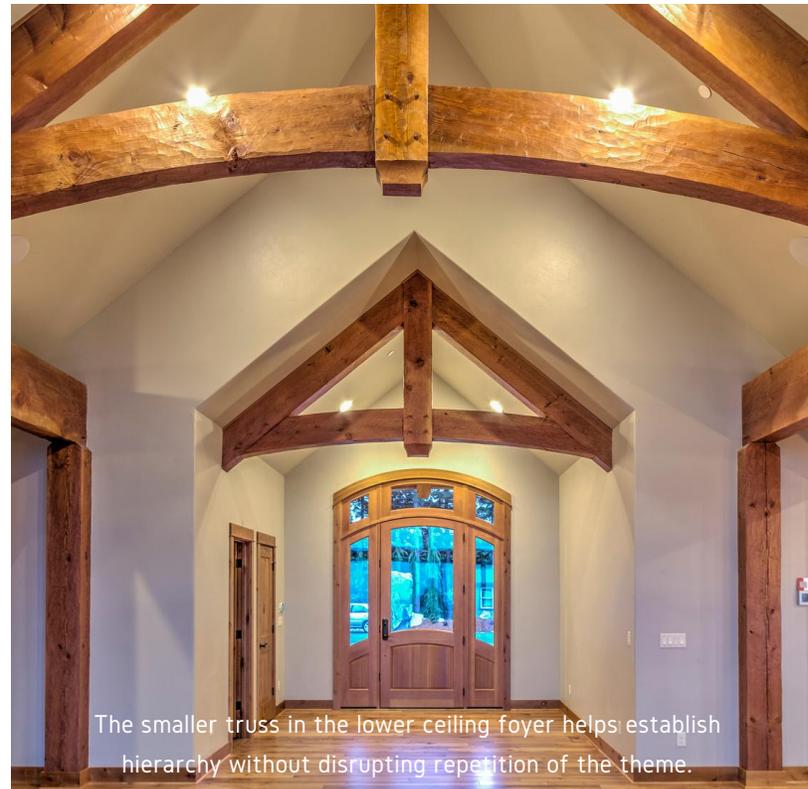
FEATURED PROJECT

# PERSPECTIVE & REFLECTION

Framing the picturesque view was the main priority driving this elegant home high on a hilltop in Washington.



The bottom chord of the trusses match the arc of the windows perfectly framing the view from front to back.



The smaller truss in the lower ceiling foyer helps establish hierarchy without disrupting repetition of the theme.



**We see projects get put on hold for a lot of reasons in this business.** Matt and Allison put their plan on hold just when their design phase was wrapping up. They found out their ten-year-old son had leukemia. Reminders of our mortality are perhaps the most precise perspective "glasses" we can wear. Our pastimes, ambitions, and irritations in life face an instant reevaluation.

As passionate and focused as we are about getting timbers right for our clients, we were partakers in this reality check. Broken tools and pressing deadlines lost their significance for

a short while. I value brief pauses like this, as it gives balance in the pressures of life.

When we heard from Matt and Allison again, their son was cancer-free, and they were ready to pick up where they left off. As you can see, it was a stunning project in a location with a great view. But now, this project had a wholesome feel... an even greater sense of purpose! A big thanks to both of them. Big thanks go out to all of our clients who have asked us to help them build post and beam elements that reflect their values.

# GETTING TO KNOW...

Joe Harelson aka “Mr. Fix-it”

It is a pleasure to watch people grow into their gifts. At our most recent quarterly meeting, Joe was a bit bewildered. The rest of the team had expressed a lot of gratitude to him over the prior three months. But he said it felt terrific to be appreciated. We appreciate Joe's growing skill set coupled with his willingness to help out in any way he can - be it timber framing in the shop or welding and fabricating improvements to the sawmill. The downside to a growing skillset is getting pulled from one job to another. It can be very frustrating. Because of this, Joe is developing awareness cues and mental hacks to stay positive when things don't always go as expected. But Joe is in good company. These attitudes and perspective hacks tie directly to our core values and are practiced by the whole team.



**What would you like people to know about your past?**

I have always had a passion for fixing things, even as a baby in a walker I was grabbing wrenches in the garage. Most of my mechanical abilities come from trial and error on my vehicles.

**Where is a place that you would like to visit?**

I would like to drive to Alaska and ride some of Canada's amazing downhill bicycle trails along the way.

**How do you like to spend your free time?**

I spend a large amount of my free time working on mechanical projects, my current one being a Toyota drive-train swap on my 1979 Dodge D50. The rest of the time is spent helping my parents with projects around the house and hanging out with my dog.

**What would you have to have happened in the next three years to make you feel like you are moving forward?**

I believe that as long as I'm bettering my abilities as a mechanic, fabricator, and timber framer, I am moving forward.



# MEMORY LANE

In 1999, my wife and I moved to Finland for a year with our four children to reconnect with our Scandinavian heritage. My wife Kristine had the opportunity to teach one on one English-speaking courses to corporate executives. And so we ended up switching roles for part of our stay. As Mr. Mom, I had many rewarding experiences. One memory, in particular, always brings a smile to my face. When fixing my daughter Lucia's hair for preschool, I convinced her that twin ponytails were about the prettiest option she had. (I knew how to do ponytails!) And for years after that, mom's ponytails simply would not do. Ponytails were never right unless dad did them. :-)

## YOUR REFERRALS SPEAK VOLUMES!



...and are **GREATLY** appreciated. When you refer friends and acquaintances to ATF, make sure they mention your name! **They get to skip the screening process...** and yes, we screen clients. You are the cream of the crop! Plus, we want to know where to send thanks... do you prefer coffee or sweets?

## Special Offer

### GET SOME ATF WEAR

Is it an Arrow Timber tent sale? Not exactly! There are clothes involved though. You see, we ordered sweatshirts, hats, etc. for the team and ordered too many extra-large sweaters by mistake. And with this particular brand, sizes are larger than average - so these extra larges feel like a tent! If you like oversized sweaters for lounging or simply like big sweaters, give us a call. Or maybe you know someone tall with big broad shoulders who would appreciate a sweater? Please pass this on. It would be a pity to turn these into rags!

FIRST COME, FIRST SERVE!  
1-833-212-0202



# HAPPINESS IS...

SOMETIMES MORE FREEDOM AND CHOICE CAN BE A HAPPINESS CURSE. FIVE YEARS AGO, I WAS WEARING WAY TOO MANY HATS WITHIN OUR COMPANY. I FACED THE CONSTANT PRESSURES AND FRUSTRATIONS TRYING TO ACCOMPLISH TOO MUCH WITH TOO LITTLE TIME. I WANTED MORE FREEDOM! THINGS HAVE CHANGED FOR THE BETTER. I NO LONGER HAVE THE INTENSE PRESSURE-COOKER DAYS OF OLD, THANKS TO AN INCREDIBLE TEAM. YAY! YET I FIND MYSELF MISSING THE SATISFACTION FROM THOSE FORCED HIGH PRODUCTIVITY DAYS. PARKINSON'S LAW STATES: "WORK EXPANDS SO AS TO FILL THE TIME AVAILABLE FOR ITS COMPLETION." FOR ME, WITH MORE AVAILABLE TIME THESE DAYS, MY TIME USE FEELS SLIPPERY. THIS DOESN'T FEEL GOOD. YES, I REALIZE THE HIGH PRODUCTION "GLORY DAYS" WERE TERRIBLE IN SO MANY WAYS AND COMPLETELY UNSUSTAINABLE OVER THE LONG HAUL. BUT IT BUGS ME HOW TIME CAN SO QUICKLY DRIBBLE AWAY. TASKS TAKE LONGER, PHONE CALLS TAKE LONGER, AND RABBIT TRAILS POP UP OUT OF NOWHERE! MORE FREEDOM AND CHOICE ARE A HAPPINESS DRAIN FROM THIS PERSPECTIVE. I HAVE BEEN FORCED TO TINKER WITH MANY HABITS AND PRODUCTIVITY HACKS AND HAVE CONCLUDED THAT WILLPOWER IS A 98-POUND WEAKLING WHEN COMPARED TO THE GORILLA OF ROUTINES AND HABITS. I AM CURRENTLY BOOSTING MY HAPPINESS BY CUTTING INTO MY "FREEDOM" WITH SMALL CHANGES TO MY NIGHTTIME AND MORNING HABITS.

## ...STICKING TO A ROUTINE

FEATURED  
READING

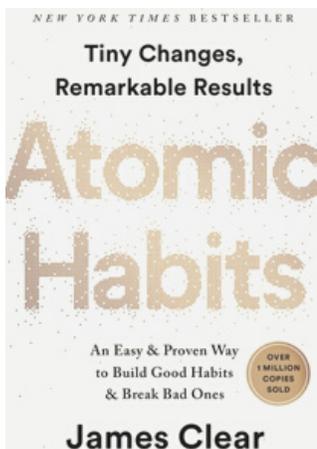


### The New Carbon Architecture: Building to Cool the Climate

BY BRUCE KING

**GRADE: A**

Bruce King had to twist arms and cajole his peers into dumbing down their contributing articles to this book. This notion makes this a book with applicable value because of its simplicity and easy comprehension. It's a paradigm-shifting tour of the innovations in architecture and construction. This content gave me a better understanding of carbon and how it relates to the construction industry.



### Atomic Habits: An Easy & Proven Way to Build Good Habits & Break Bad Ones

BY JAMES CLEAR

**GRADE: A+**

Once a habit is built, it never goes away. New patterns are written over the top of old habits. All of the destructive habit pathways you have ever had are lurking somewhere in your brain just waiting for the right cue to bring them back to life. This book gives you four principles to feed and nurture good habits and four opposing beliefs to starve and repel bad habits. Get the book, read it, and take small atomic action steps.



# THE ARROW TIMBER PHILOSOPHY

People want things which reflect their personality.

---

People want an enjoyable process with a mutual exchange.

---

People want teamwork, transparency, and creative solutions.

I experience this over and over in the course of a year, not only when clients view albums or 3-D models in my office, but especially so immediately after the completion of their timber structure. **Appreciative head nods and slow smiles have almost become a trademark!** I fell in love with the timber framing craft in 2002 and I still feel just as privileged and enthused. Many, many, personalized structures have been created since then. In fact, my **passion, artistry, and repertoire of creative solutions** have all grown dramatically... I sometimes wonder if it is simply something to do with rising to challenges and building upon success. You probably agree that exposed beams provide geometric beauty and resonate deep within our psyche... The style brings to mind **durability, longevity, safety, laughter, smiles, and home to many warm feelings.**

*To your goals, momentum, and happiness*



Bert Sarkkinen, Owner

## THE QUESTION

What is the best way for you to acquire your personalized timber living?

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Not too much, not too little. Not too high, not too low. Just the right mix of timber presence and style... How to find that sweet spot which you can enjoy for years and pass on to your heirs. It's really about enriching the lives of those around you and sharing your unique personality and viewpoints with them. **Who is the best fit for your project?**

Seek out and choose, therefore, things that will evoke head nods and slow smiles. Things which resonate with your personality. Things that do not grow old or boring with the passage of time. You will not regret it.



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SO, THOSE WERE THE "GLORY DAYS" P. 9

DAD'S PONYTAILS ARE THE BEST PONYTAILS P. 8



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