



Custom Home Designers

A DANIEL ALLEN DESIGNS GUIDE

What's Actually in a Complete Set of Plans

A visual breakdown of permit-ready construction documents
— and how to spot the gaps in a set that only looks finished.

Most "plans" are not a complete set

A handsome rendering and a floor plan are enough to fall in love with a home. They are not enough to build one. The difference between the two is where budgets blow up, schedules slip, and builders start guessing.

A complete set of construction documents — a CD set — answers every question a builder, an inspector, and a trade will ask, before they have to ask it. When the drawings are complete, the price is real and the build is calm. When they're thin, every gap becomes a change order.

This guide shows you what a complete set contains, page by page, and how to tell at a glance whether the set in front of you is permit-ready or merely pretty.

"No gaps. No chaos. No expensive surprises."

What a complete set contains

A full residential set is far more than a floor plan. Each drawing answers a different builder's question.

The drawing	The question it answers
Site & civil plan	Where the home sits, setbacks, grading, drainage, and utilities.
Floor plans	Every wall, dimension, door, and window, room by room.
Exterior elevations	How all four sides look, with materials and heights called out.
Building sections	How the home is built top to bottom — what's behind the walls.
Roof plan	Slopes, ridges, valleys, and how water leaves the building.
Foundation plan	Footings, slab, and structure carrying the loads above.
Framing & structural	Beams, headers, and spans, sized and located.
Electrical & lighting	Every outlet, switch, fixture, and circuit.
Plumbing & mechanical	Fixtures, runs, and where the systems live.
Interior elevations	Kitchens, baths, and built-ins, drawn to scale.
Schedules & details	Doors, windows, finishes, and the connections that hold it together.

Complete vs. incomplete

Two sets can look similar across the table. They build very differently.

A PERMIT-READY SET

- ✓ Fully dimensioned — a builder never has to scale a drawing
- ✓ Door, window & finish schedules included
- ✓ Structural sizing and details resolved
- ✓ Electrical, plumbing & mechanical drawn, not assumed
- ✓ Sections show what's inside the walls
- ✓ Allowances are few; selections are specified
- ✓ Passes plan review with minimal comments
- ✓ Bids come back close to one another

AN INCOMPLETE SET

- Missing dimensions; trades guess in the field
- No schedules — selections decided on site
- Structure "by builder" or left blank
- Systems shown only as a floor plan
- Few or no sections or details
- Heavy on allowances that hide real cost
- Kicked back by plan review for missing info
- Bids vary wildly — no one is pricing the same thing

When three builders return three very different prices, it usually isn't the builders. It's the plans. They're each pricing a different set of assumptions.

A quick test before you build

Open the plans you have and look for these. Each missing item is a question a builder will answer for you — often at a price.

- Are the floor plans fully dimensioned? No wall should require a ruler.

- Is there a window and door schedule? Sizes, types, and quantities, listed.

- Are there building sections? At least one cut showing wall, floor, and roof assembly.

- Is the structure designed? Beams and headers sized — not "to be determined."

- Are electrical and plumbing shown? Outlets, fixtures, and runs, not just rooms.

- Are finishes and selections specified? Or is the set a field of allowances?

- Are interior elevations included for kitchens and baths? The costly rooms, drawn.

- Is there a site plan with setbacks and grading? The first thing the county checks.

THE NEXT STEP

A home that feels inevitable

A complete set is not extra paper. It is the difference between a builder pricing the home you want and a builder pricing their best guess. Every detail resolved on the page is a detail not negotiated, mid-build, at the worst possible time.

I design homes for Metro Atlanta families and the builders who construct them, and I draw them to be built — complete sets that hold up at plan review, in the bidding, and on the job site. I stay involved from the first sketch through the final document, so nothing falls through the gaps.

If you're holding a set of plans and unsure whether it's ready, send it over. I'll tell you honestly what's there and what isn't.



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Start the conversation

dan@danielalldesigns.com

Daniel Allen Designs · Residential Design · Metro Atlanta · danielalldesigns.com

Serving homeowners and builders from concept through construction documents.