

Main Floor Master Suites - A Growing Trend Across the Country

A Builder's Perspective on Main Floor Master Plans vs Traditional Two Story Home Plans – Construction Differences and Costs

If you are retired or planning to retire soon, and are looking for a new home, **chances are you're considering floor plans with a main floor master suite**. But "boomers" aren't the only home owners eyeing downstairs sleeping arrangements. **Even some younger families are starting to consider a home with a main floor master bedroom...** once the kids are in school, there's not as much reason to have a bedroom just down the hall.

There are certainly benefits. Fewer walks up and down the stairs. Perhaps even a private patio or deck off the master bedroom for early morning quiet time. Some distance from the sounds of guests and children - that is, unless the guests and children are downstairs!

But there can also be some higher costs.

In general, **a two-story home with a main floor master bedroom will have a higher per square foot cost than a two-story home with all bedrooms located on the second floor.**

Why? Well, let's take a close look at two homes and find out.

The two homes we're going to study both offer about 2400 square feet. **But it's the differences in how that square footage is distributed that add to the cost to build each home, and thus the cost to purchase the home.**

We'll compare and contrast two terrific homes by Frank Betz.

Both of these homes have a lot more to offer than a traditional "box" starter home. There's visual appeal on the inside and the outside. Both offer a master suite with an attached private sitting room. Both have open, vaulted master bathrooms.

Traditional Two Story – Second Floor Master Bedroom

The first home, by Frank Betz, is called **The Bostwick**.





Total Square Footage:

2410 sq ft

First Floor:

1218 sq ft

Second Floor:

1192 sq ft

Bedrooms: **4**

Bathrooms: **3**

(Downstairs Bedroom 4 can easily convert to a formal living room or office)

Main Floor Master Bedroom Floor Plan

We'll compare and contrast with **The MacKenzie**, also by Frank Betz. **This home plan offers a main floor master bedroom.**

Total Square Footage:

2344 sq ft

First Floor:

1642 sq ft

Second Floor:

702 sq ft

Bedrooms: **3**

Bathrooms: **2.5**



This home includes the optional bonus room on the second floor.

The Main Floor Master home and the traditional Second

Both offer three bedrooms, with the option of either a 4th bedroom or some additional living/entertaining space.



But you may have already noticed that the exteriors are quite different. **The plan with the main floor master has a lot more roof.** More roof means higher costs for several reasons.

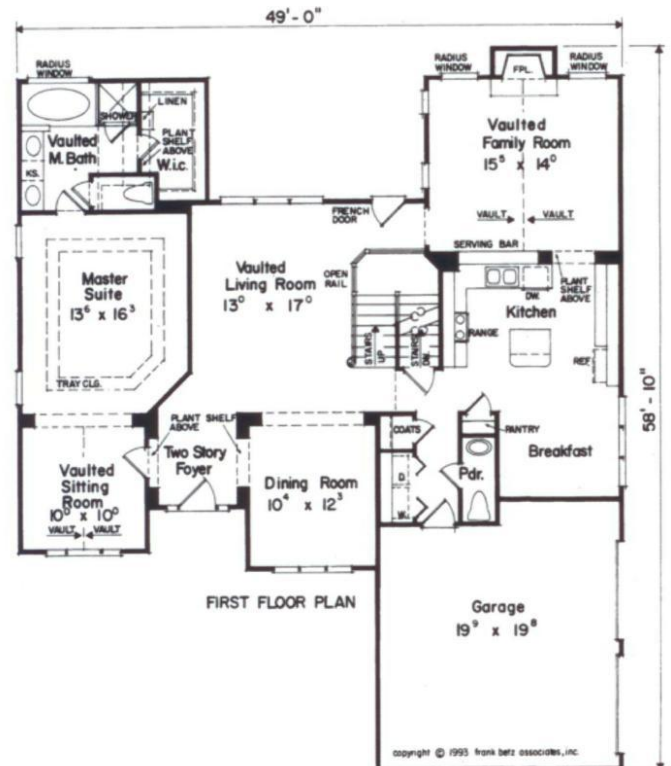
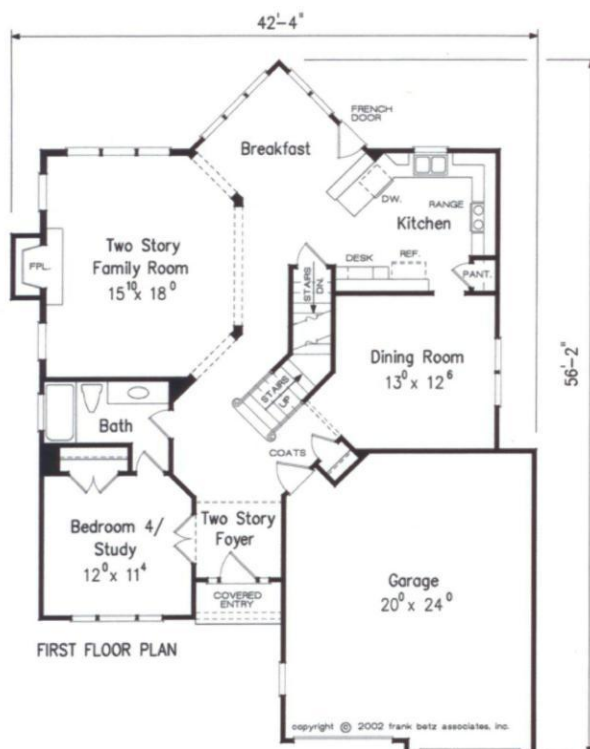
- **A steeper roof is taller**, thus more framing labor and materials are needed. But an advantage can be increased attic height and space.
- **Each time the roof line changes**,

more framing materials (and labor) are needed. A higher level of expertise is required - which can also increase framing costs. The Bostwick has three basic rooflines. The Mackenzie has at least six.

There's just plain more roof. That means higher labor and material costs for roofing as well.

The next big difference has to do with the footprint of the home. **The "footprint" is the amount of ground that the home covers.**

Let's compare the **Bostwick on the left** with the **Mackenzie on the right**.



Site Preparation and Clearing -

Even though the Mackenzie is about 65 square feet smaller than the Bostwick, **a larger site will need to be prepared** for the Mackenzie.

The Bostwick is only 42 feet wide, while the Mackenzie is 49 feet wide. And the Mackenzie is also 2.5 feet longer than the Bostwick.

So there will be somewhat higher charges for grading and foundation preparation.



Foundation: Slab, Crawlspace, or Basement -

The "footprint" of the home includes not only the square footage of the "heated" or living space on the first floor, but also that of the garage.

The Bostwick has 1218 sq ft of heated space, plus about 480 sq ft of unheated garage, for a total footprint of 1698 sq ft. The Mackenzie has 1642 sq ft of heated space on the first floor, plus about 380 sq ft of garage space, for a footprint of about 2022 sq ft.

The foundation costs will higher for the plan with the main floor master bedroom.

Framing -



There are several reasons costs will increase, especially with this main floor master plan.

- **There is greater square footage on the first floor.** Even though the second floor is smaller, that will not compensate - **all the walls must still extend upwards until they reach the roof.**

Any time there is an extra "corner", costs increase. More materials are used, and more are wasted making additional cuts. More labor is required.

The Bostwick has a total of 19 corners on the exterior walls of the first floor - just look for any time a wall ends or changes direction. The Mackenzie also has 19 corners. So the number of direction changes are the same.

However, the length of exterior wall is much greater with the Mackenzie, because of the way the master suite and family room extend off the rear of the home.

- **More exterior wall means more heavy-duty framing, more sealing, more insulation, and, of course, more labor.**

There's a reason a lot of builders charge extra for vaulted, cathedral, or trey ceilings. They have a materials and labor cost as well! Cathedral and vaulted ceilings can require extra beams, different framing techniques, longer than standard framing materials, and more.

- Homes with main floor master suites often have at least one vaulted room. The Mackenzie actually has four vaulted rooms - the sitting room in the master suite, the master bath, the living room, and the family room are all vaulted in the original plan.

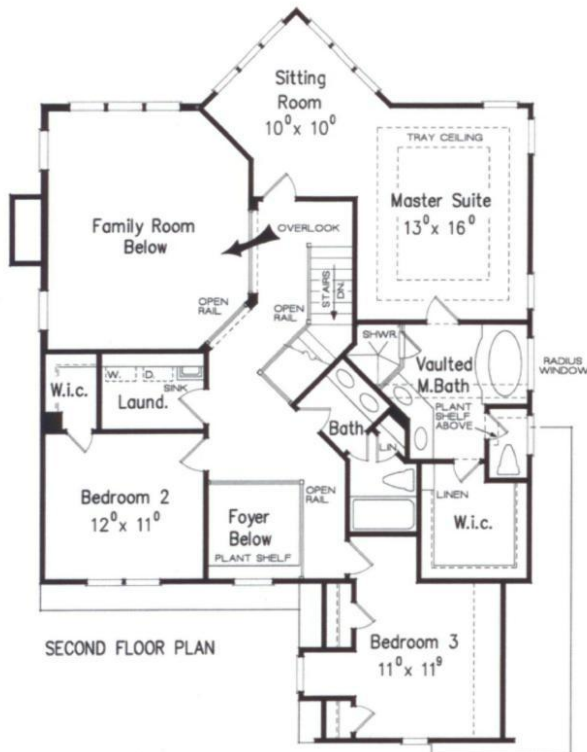
Side Entry Garage

- Not all main floor master bedroom floor plans have side entry garages. But if the home plan you choose does, the **driveway and pathway costs may be slightly higher** - it all depends on how the home is situated on the lot.

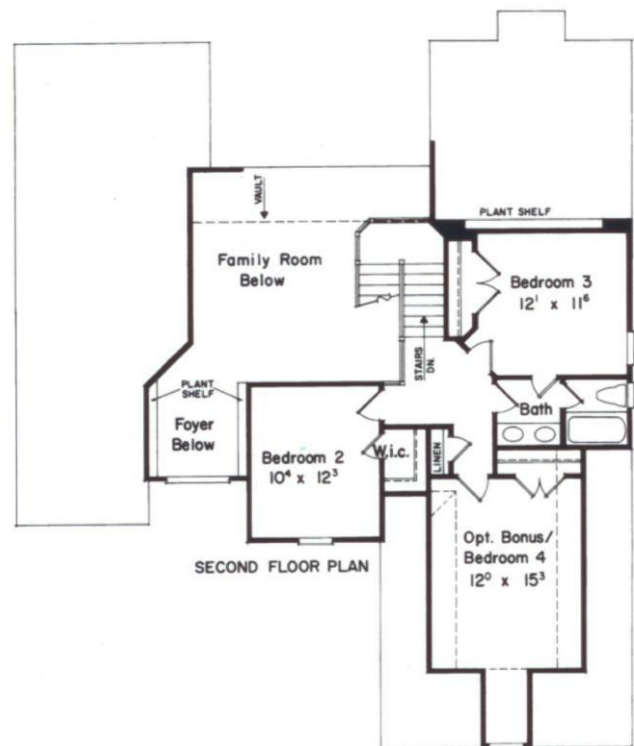


Now let's take a quick look at the second floor of each of these homes...

The Bostwick - Second Floor



The Mackenzie - Second Floor



Even though the second floor of the Mackenzie is much smaller than the second floor of the Bostwick, **the amount of framing needed is very similar.** The Mackenzie has more upstairs

corners, and plenty of interior and exterior walls (you can see the narrow lines denoting roof - the walls still have to get up to the roof!)

If you've been comparing homes with and without main floor master bedrooms, and perhaps wondering why the homes with the main floor masters had a little higher price tag, now hopefully you have a better idea of what goes into these two different styles of homes.

The Bottom Line – Cost Differences in Main Floor Master vs Second Floor Master

In general, expect to pay about 10-20% more per square foot for a home with a main floor master suite than one that has about the same square footage on both floors. However, this can vary greatly - it all depends on all the different aspects of the two plans. Is the lot cost the same for both homes? Do both homes have the exact same interior and exterior finishes?

Even more important - **does moving the master bedroom downstairs substantially increase the size of the first floor, while leaving a reduced size second floor?** There are home plans available in which the master bedroom is downstairs, but the plan still includes a "full" upstairs.

In a situation like this, the only way to "fit" the master bedroom downstairs is to lose some living space - the sizes of the other rooms have to shrink, and you may lose a living room or office - but have a larger bonus room upstairs. There won't be any vaulted rooms, but the overall square footage for the price can increase.



Homes with main floor master suites are becoming more popular, and if you're looking ahead to possible resale, a floor plan with a downstairs owner retreat will definitely have demand.

If you already know that a first floor master is right for you, we'll help you build the home you've always wanted.

If you haven't decided yet, both home styles have a lot to offer, for different reasons.

Both the example homes we worked with here are terrific plans, and showcase what a Raleigh custom home builder can offer - **extensive crown molding, lots of tile and hardwood, and Stanton Homes' signature archways** - like the one seen here - all for a lot less than you might think.

If you're considering **purchasing or building a home with a main floor master suite**, check out what Stanton Homes has to offer.

We can build an exceptional living experience for you, on your lot or ours, with your home plan or ours, anywhere in the Triangle.

Check out some of the other wonderful [main floor master suite floor plans](#) available from Frank Betz & Associates.

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