**Select a Builder**

Whether you are building a condominium, a townhouse, a single-family home in a subdivision or a custom built house, you want to know that you are buying a good quality home from a reputable builder.

The home builder must understand how the home’s complex systems work, pay attention to detail and coordinate various contractors in a team effort to build a quality product. So, you should choose your builder as carefully as you choose your new home.

Before you begin your search, ask yourself some questions. What type of home do you want? In what price range? Where? After you have answered these and other important questions about the new home you are seeking, you can address the question of who should build it.

A good place to start your search for a builder is with your local home builders association, we can provide a list of their builder members. The real estate section in your local newspaper is still a good source of information about builders who are active in your area, the types of homes they are building and the prices you can expect to pay. Visit Parade Homes to see styles of homes you may like. Also, you can ask friends and relatives for recommendations or check with local real estate agents.

When buying a new home, you are not buying just a structure. Along with the structure comes a package of services, and the quality of those services will have an important effect on your enjoyment of your home. For instance, most homes come with a one-year warranty on workmanship and materials. Since virtually every home is going to need at least minor adjustments and repairs of warranty items during the first year, you should look for a builder who will provide quality service after the sale.

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The best way to learn about the quality of service a builder offers is to ask previous customers. If you are buying a detached home in a subdivision, a townhome or a multifamily condominium, find out what the builder has recently built in the area near where you are buying. Then visit some of the previous projects and ask the residents about their experiences with their homes and their builder. The best time to visit is usually a Saturday morning when people are out doing yard work or chores.

Don't be shy about approaching people. Knock on some doors if you have to. In most cases, a builder's previous customers will be open with you. Try to talk to at least three or four homeowners in each neighborhood. You should not rely solely on the views of only one person. Ask questions like: Are you happy with your home? If you had any problems, were they fixed promptly and properly? Would you buy another home from this builder? Take notes so you can make comparisons later.

Remember that cost is not a direct measure of quality. High quality combines good design and fine products and materials with superior workmanship and proper installation. Just because one home is less expensive than another does not mean it is a better value. Likewise, a more expensive home may not mean better craftsmanship. Look at the quality of the construction features. Inspect the quality of the cabinetry, carpeting, trimwork and paint. Get specifics, take notes and never hesitate to ask questions.

A home is one of the largest and most important purchases you can make. If you do your homework, ask questions and come prepared, you will develop knowledge and a sense of confidence that will help.

***Do your homework before having work done on your home***.

Use this checklist to help you select a builder to build your home.

* Does the builder have a permanent business location and a good reputation with local banks and suppliers?
* How long have they been in the building business? It usually takes three to five years to establish a financially sound business. Will they be around after the construction is complete to service any warranties?
* Have you called your local Better Business Bureau? They can alert you to any complaints.
* Does the builder have sufficient workers compensation and general liability insurance? If not, you may be liable for any construction-related accidents on your premises.
* Will the builder provide you with names of previous customers? Ask them if they would hire the builder again.
* Have you seen the builder work, both completed and in progress? Check for quality of workmanship and materials.
* Are you able to communicate with the builder? Remember you will be in close contact with them throughout the construction process and afterward as you live in your new home.
* Will the builder provide you with a complete and clearly written contract? The contract will benefit both of you. Review it carefully.
* Be cautious of unusually low-priced bids. If the builder/remodeler is unable to pay for the materials and labor as the project proceeds, this may indicate a potential problem