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BUILDING SUCCESS 101

Q: How much do codes vary from place to place?

A: In the United States, the International Residential Code serves as the model code. States, and sometimes localities, can adopt all, part or none of it, which means that requirements can vary somewhat from one jurisdiction to another. Politics can come into play here, but code variations also depend on local conditions: a home in San Francisco will need more seismic bracing than one in St. Louis. Professional builders and remodelers will understand the code requirements for the jurisdictions where they work.

Can You Finish My Home By...?

Understanding the variables that affect the schedule

Many clients approach a builder with an idea about how long it should take to finish their new home. Some underestimate the time the project will require, while others expect it to take a lot longer.

Every builder loves being able to deliver a quality home on budget and ahead of schedule, but the truth is that it's better for everyone when the clients have an accurate understanding of how long the project will take.

Design Matters

The biggest variables in project duration are size and design. It's no surprise that a big, complex home will take longer than a smaller and simpler one.

If the homeowners already have a complete set of plans and specs from an architect, that will speed up the builder's design phase. If not, they need to include time for that planning and design work.

Ballparking a timeline is straightforward when the home's size, layout and specifications resemble others the builder has completed in the area. For a unique custom home, however, the builder, the client and perhaps the architect will need to work together to develop a realistic timeline.

An important consideration is when the homeowners would like the home to be ready. Do they want to move in by next August so their kids can start the school year in that town? Do they want it done by May so they can host a family reunion? The builder can work backward from that, but with a firm deadline, it's best to start the project as soon as possible. That includes building in extra time to account for unexpected delays.

Keeping the Authorities Happy

Another scheduling factor is the permitting process. The number of permits and approvals required affect the time a project will take. Depending on the home's location, you may need signoffs from the zoning board, the building department, the health department, the fire department and even the homeowners association.

The process is usually straightforward and predictable, if frustratingly slow, but sometimes it can be a wild card. The municipality might normally have a two-week lead time for reviewing and approving plans, but that time can stretch out if the building inspector has unexpected questions or concerns.

While the builder can't eliminate permitting delays, it's important to remember that bureaucracies are staffed with human beings. It is human nature to give better service to someone you know and who has made an effort to understand your processes and priorities. One easily overlooked advantage of working with an established professional building company is that its people will have created good working relationship with the local authorities.

What Homeowners Can Do

Once the project gets underway, the most important thing homeowners can do to reduce the chance of delays is to make design and product decisions on or before the deadlines set by the builder. These decisions range from choosing custom cabinets early enough for them to be built and delivered when needed, to making sure the electrical outlets are placed to accommodate the preferred furniture layout so that the outlets won't have to be moved later.

Homeowners who want the project to keep humming along on schedule won't change those selections after making them. Changes made late in the design stage can delay plan completion; those made after project kickoff can delay the finish date. Homeowners who understand this will invest the time and effort needed to make firm decisions.

The homeowners who enjoy the smoothest projects take a partnership attitude. They understand how seemingly small decisions can have cascading impacts on the schedule, so they work with the architect and builder from the initial design concept all the way to the final punch list.

It should come as no surprise that this partnership works best when you

choose a professional builder you know you can trust.

Warm regards,



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We take pride in constructing 100% of our new homes to rigorous environmental standards such as ENERGY STAR®, National Green Building Standard™ and DOE Zero Energy Ready Home as well as the EPA's WaterSense® and Indoor airPLUS labels.

