



CHELSEA DESIGN | BUILD PRESENTS

# The Ultimate Guide to Selecting a Custom Home Builder

# MANUAL



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# WELCOME



## We're All For Making Informed Decisions

You may have heard the custom home building experience is stressful, but that doesn't have to be the case for you. Finding the right partner to build your future home with is paramount to a successful outcome. You can do yourself a favor by taking the time to properly vet and choose your builder. This manual describes the necessary steps to lay a strong foundation and ensure your happiness.

# .01



## DEFINE WHAT YOU WANT

When searching for a custom home builder, you need to find that sweet spot. Like Godilocks, you're on the hunt for someone who is *just right*. Up until now, you've probably dreamed about your home, what it will look like, and how it will function for your family. At this point it's time to define your ideal client-builder relationship. Keep in mind that you'll spend a lot of time over the course of a year (or more) with the people on your build team. Thus, creating this list is a worthwhile exercise. On the next page, we've put together questions to guide you.

# .01



## DISCUSSION PROMPTS

### PROXIMITY

Do I want my build team to feel like friends?

Do I want to keep it strictly professional?

### PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

What type of people do I enjoy working with the most?

What are the personalities of my favorite co-workers? Of my closest friends?

### TRUST

What do I need from my builder and build team to trust them with this project?

### COMMUNICATION

How often do I expect to be in touch with my build team?

What types of updates am I looking to receive?

What things do I care to be involved in?

What things do I not want to be involved in?

### CHALLENGES

What behaviors might lead me to feel disconnected from my build team?

What behaviors cause me frustration with coworkers? With my friends?

What things might cause a breakdown in the relationship?



# CONTENTS

WELCOME	.....	PG. 3
MAKE A LIST	.....	PG. 4
CONDUCT A SEARCH	.....	PG. 6
PREPARE TO MEET	.....	PG. 9
VET YOUR OPTIONS	.....	PG. 11
COMMON RED FLAGS	.....	PG. 15
CLOSING	.....	PG. 17

# .02



## FIND QUALIFIED BUILDERS NEAR YOU

In this stage of your research, you will combine the *who* with the *what*. Highly qualified crafts people are able to recreate anything your heart desires. But, it's imperative you pay attention to the type of work the builder typically produces. You want your dream home requirements to match the capabilities of the builder.

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## 3 TIPS TO FINDING YOUR BUILDER

### REFERRALS

Ask people in your network who they recommend.



### DRIVE AROUND TOWN

Drive through your favorite areas to see who's building there.



### SEARCH ONLINE

Search online for "custom home builders" near me.



# .02



## NARROW YOUR OPTIONS

### WEBSITE & SOCIAL MEDIA

Is the informational helpful & relevant?  
What's their personality like?



### REVIEWS & TESTIMONIALS

What are others saying about their  
experience with the builder?



### PORTFOLIO

Do they have a board portfolio?  
Do they build in your style?





# .03

## PREPARE FOR THE INITIAL CONSULTATION



Now that you've narrowed down your builders to a select few, it's time for the initial consultation. This meeting is the important first step in your client-builder relationship. While we often make decisions for emotional reasons, aim to strike a balance between maintaining a rational point of view and following your gut instinct. This is your opportunity to find a builder that has the experience and skills, *and* the right personality that you'll gel with long term.

# .03



## DISCUSSION PROMPTS

### SET YOUR GOALS

What outcomes do you expect from your initial consultation?

### KNOW YOUR NUMBERS

How much do you want to spend?

What's the absolute most you can spend?

### LIST YOUR MUST-HAVES

What are the most important things you must have in your custom build? (Think about everything from exterior to layout to finishes).

### BRING INSPIRATION

What photos on social media do you have to share?

What do you want your home to look like?

What do you want your home to feel like?

What's your style(s)?

### PREPARE QUESTIONS

What do you want to make sure you find out from the builder?

What do you need more information about?

# EVALUATE YOUR OPTIONS

# .04



By now, you've found at least two builders you really like. But, in order to move forward, there's a bit more you'll need to uncover. Some of this information may have come to light during the initial consultation, but it's in your best interest to cross your T's and dot your I's when finalizing your choice of builder.

# .04



## TOPICS FOR ANALYSIS

### EXPERIENCE

- Years in business
- Team member experience
- Subcontractor experience
- Selection of subcontractors



### PROFESSIONALISM

- Business documentation
- Insurance & licenses
- Worker conduct oversight
- Project Oversight



# .04



## TOPICS FOR ANALYSIS CONT.

### COMMUNICATION

- Builder-Client communication
- Builder availability and hours
- Communication platforms
- Internal communication



### REPUTATION

- References you can call
- Reviews & testimonials
- Accolades
- Community involvement



# .04



## TOPICS FOR ANALYSIS CONT.

### COMPANY STRUCTURE

- Company culture
- Governance/oversight
- Organizational structure
- Project budget model



### WARRANTIES & PROTECTIONS

- Change orders
- Timeline or budget scope creep
- Workmanship warranty
- Warranty coverage & length





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## BARRIERS TO SUCCESS

You've done your research, vetted your options, and you're close to making the choice for your custom home builder. Before you sign a contract, look out for common red flags in your contract. Unexperienced builders may try to offer you the moon and the stars to win your business. But, overly optimistic budgets and timelines can cost you time and money down the road.

# .05



## COMMON RED FLAGS

### PRICE TOO LOW

How does this builder's price compare to the others?

Is the price unrealistic or too good to be true?

Have some details been left out of the price?

### TIMELINE TOO SHORT

How does this builder's timeline compare to the others?

Are they outlining every aspect of the build in the project?

Is their schedule detailed and organized?

### NOT TAILORED TO YOU

Did they ask enough questions and listen to your requirements?

Is the proposal tailored to your requirements?

Is the documentation specific to your project or is it generic?



# CLOSING



**We wish you a successful  
custom build!**

Choosing a builder to bring your dream home to life is a big decision. We hope this guide equipped you with the information you need to choose the best builder for your project. We'd love the opportunity to meet with you and learn more about your future. Regardless of who you choose, we wish you a joyful building experience!