



HOME BUILDERS ASSOCIATION of Dayton

Your Next New Home: Never Too Soon to Plan

By Jenny Diorio, President
Home Builders Association of Dayton

If you want to build a new home and move in before the start of the 2009 school year, the time to plan is NOW.

By the time you do your due diligence, interview builders, find the building lot of your dreams, work out the kinks in your budget, get your existing house on the market, select appropriate design professionals, and make certain that you qualify for the mortgage you need, you need to start planning when the kids are settled into their summer mode or even before the grand finale fireworks of Memorial Day.

Most homebuyers underestimate the up front time it takes before the first shovel of dirt gets turned.

Even if you will be purchasing a home from one of the Dayton area's fine production builders – a somewhat streamlined process – you will need to allow at least six months for construction from the date you sign your sales agreement (perhaps more if the builder's production schedule is stacked up).

As you begin the process, there is a tendency to focus on what you want in your new house, but don't forget that there are probably things you need to do with your existing home to make certain it sells within a reasonable period of time.

If you will be retaining the professional services of a Realtor®, he or she should be able to provide you with useful “merchandising” tips that can improve the curb appeal and/or interior of your home. You can spend those boring winter months “de-cluttering” your home. You will also find a few tastefully arranged throw pillows, an accent color on a wall – these and other very inexpensive steps can do wonders for the marketing of your house.

While you are going about the process of selecting a builder (a HBA Registered Builder, of course!), it also makes sense to sit down with a professional lender to pre-qualify for a mortgage loan. You want to make certain your timing is right here – lenders have limited flexibility on how far they can extend “rate locks,” and you want the very best rate available. Despite the turmoil in mortgage lending, if you have good credit, a job and steady income, you will find there is still plenty of mortgage credit to be had at good rates. For well-qualified buyers, rates are running a little over six percent, which is a very good range on a historic basis.

Nothing is more important, of course, than selecting your builder.

Ask builders on your list for the addresses of their recently built homes and subdivisions. Builders may even be able to provide names of some home owners who would be willing to talk with you.

As you begin to focus-in on two or three potential builders, be certain you visit communities where they are currently building or have built in the past. As you drive through, and you spot homeowner in their yards or talking a walk, don't be afraid to ask them about their experiences – and especially about the builder's responsiveness during and after construction.

It also makes sense for the builder to provide references – former customers you can call for their assessment of the builder's construction quality and customer service.

When you talk to builders and home owners, take along a notebook to record the information you find and your personal impressions about specific builders and homes. Doing so will help you to make comparisons later. Some questions you can ask people include: 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?

Remember, if you want to have the kids in their new school by September of next year, the time to begin to act is now!