



HOME BUILDERS ASSOCIATION
of Dayton

Finding the Right Builder

By Greg Vreeland, President
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Last week, I pointed out the many new home choices available in the Dayton area. Now, after it's been determined the type of new home product to purchase, it would be time to find the right builder to work with to make that dream home come true.

While many consumers know exactly what they want in a new home, fewer know exactly how to search for the builder who meets all of their requirements.

A good place to start is your local Home Builders Association. This organization represents the majority of the builders in the Dayton area. The HBA Registered Builder Program sets standards that these builders are required maintain.

And word of mouth is still a very tough recommendation to beat. If you have friends and acquaintances – normally very demanding and particular – that rave about the builder who recently completed their new home, this is a very important indicator of quality and reliability.

However, nothing is more important than face-to-face meetings with builders or their representatives. If a successful home building experience is a matter of quality, schedule and price, it is also a matter of good communication and chemistry between builder and buyer.

After all, you are buying more than a structure. Along with that structure comes a package of services, and the quality of those services will have an important impact on your experience during construction and, ultimately, your enjoyment of your new home.

For instance, all homes built by HBA Registered Builder Members come with a minimum one-year warranty on workmanship and materials. Since virtually every new home will need at least minor adjusting and “tweaking,” quality service after the sale should be an important part of your search criteria.

One important way to pre-qualify builders is to determine whether they are Registered Builder Members of the HBA. This assures you that the builder subscribes to the highest standards of professionalism, quality and service. Moreover, it assures that you have recourse to an independent, third-party mechanism for resolving any disputes that may arise during or after construction of the home.

Talking with a builder's previous customers is also another excellent way to determine the quality of service offered by a builder. 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 three or four home owners in each of the neighborhoods in which you are considering buying a new home.

Also try to remember that cost is not a direct measure of quality, and be certain that you are comparing apples-to-apples when assessing cost differences among builders.

In any event, don't be misled by factors like "cost per square foot." This is somewhat akin to purchasing an automobile by the pound.

Also be prepared to make trade-offs. If maximum square footage is your number one priority, do not expect lots of space *and* lots of amenities for an unrealistically low price. If your priority is top-of-the line finishes and fixtures, you may have to accept somewhat less living space.

And don't be like the guy who "knows the price of everything and the value of nothing." Just because one home is less expensive than another does not mean it is a better value. Look at the quality of the construction features. Inspect the quality of the cabinetry, carpeting, fixtures, tops, trim work and paint. Ask about the experience and quality of the subcontractors and suppliers who will be working on your home.

Finally, ask, ask, and ask. You can't get the information you want unless you ask the questions. Get specifics, take notes.

Confidence comes with knowledge, and it is impossible to know too much before you purchase a new home.