

## 10-Point Builder Inspection Guide

### Before Choosing a Builder, Be Sure to Ask the Right Questions

Building your home involves many decisions, from selecting your floor plan to customizing your kitchen to picking out fixtures and finishes. But your first big decision is selecting the right builder. The Build Right Institute wants you to be armed with the information you need to make your search for the right builder an easy one. No matter who you build with, make sure your builder builds right. Below are ten checkpoints to use as you interview prospective builders.

#### **□ Does the builder go above and beyond any basic home inspection code requirements?**

It is important to ensure that your builder has developed innovative building methods to construct a safe and high-performing home. This means going beyond basic code requirements. A few ways in which a builder might go beyond minimum code requirements to include additional features that ensure structural integrity and superior quality are as follows. Before you choose a builder, ask if the builder takes these above-and-beyond steps:

- Do you do anything to provide for superior insulation where the floor meets the foundation? (such as insulating rim joists with hard foam)
- What steps do you take to ensure a solid, squeak-proof floor? For instance, do you glue and screw the subfloor, as opposed to traditional nailing? (which can result in squeaky floors)
- Do you anchor every floor joist to the steel basement beam? (for a strong, quiet floor and for structural integrity)
- Can you make my life easier by anticipating where I'll want to hang home decorating elements like drapery hardware and towel bars? Do you typically install additional wood "blocking" between the wall studs for extra strength in these areas, as well as behind kitchen cabinets to strengthen the wall and cabinets?

#### **□ I want to be sure my family can breathe easy in our new home. Will this builder take the steps necessary for indoor air quality?**

Your family's health should be as important to your builder as it is to you. There are two vital aspects to ensuring indoor air quality in your home: building tight and ventilating properly. Ask your prospective builder if they take these steps:

- Do you install furnaces with a sealed combustion chamber to help ensure proper ventilation, with external fresh-air intake and exhaust air outflow?
- Do you ensure that each water heater is power-vented to prevent unwanted gasses from entering my home?
- How are the bathroom fans equipped? (Bathroom fans can be equipped with six-inch exhaust ducting to properly release moisture and odors.)

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- Most importantly, there are things that you can do in your home to maintain the integrity of your indoor air quality. Ask your prospective builder what he or she can do to educate you on how to operate ventilation mechanicals, how to monitor indoor air quality and even how to minimize the moisture which results from day-to-day activities like cooking and showering.

## **☐ Will this builder construct my home so I won't have to worry about moisture and mold?**

Moisture-related problems can start long before you move into your new home if not prevented during construction. Builders can use construction techniques to prevent rain and snow from penetrating the interior of your home, and utilize engineered materials and systems to help remove moisture after your home is complete. To ensure that you will not have to worry about moisture and mold, ask your builder the following questions:

- Do you wrap the homes you build in Tyvek®? (a product that acts as a raincoat to protect walls and gables)
- What do you do to meticulously seal each window to prevent water leaks?
- Upon completion, will you work with me to provide education on proper use of an engineered heating, cooling and ventilation system to ensure that moisture is controlled and exhausted from the interior of my home?

## **☐ Will this builder provide me with a written guarantee that my home will perform for the long haul? And, will this builder handle warranty issues in a fair and timely manner?**

It's important to ask your builder upfront what type of warranty they provide. A reputable builder will usually include a 10-year structural warranty at no cost to the homeowner. Should you ever have an issue or warranty question about your home, your builder should work with you to resolve the issue to your satisfaction. Some builders' "extended warranties" are actually insurance policies. Ask your prospective builder what assurances you have that you will never experience the hassle of working with a third-party insurer, getting multiple quotes and approvals, or waiting for your claim to be reimbursed.

## **☐ Will the final price I pay for my home match the upfront estimate provided by this builder?**

A good builder will have precise building systems and methodology to help prevent budget variances against the initial price quoted. It is also good to know if the price of the home is fully-quoted for fixtures, cabinetry, flooring and many more of the interior and exterior finishes you usually find in builder allowances. With these included finishes, you get to customize the interior and exterior and still stay on budget. Having a guaranteed price on your home tends to eliminate unpleasant surprises during construction and at closing. Ask any prospective builder for a

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detailed list of what the price quoted does, and does not, include so you can avoid unpleasant surprises. Also, ask if you can get a guarantee that the price won't vary from the initial quote without your written consent.

## **❑ Can this builder provide me with a guaranteed move-in date?**

Unlike some builders who build the home on-site piece-by-piece and at the mercy of the elements, builders who custom-craft homes indoors can closely estimate the completion date of your home and help you identify when you can move in. In that case, rain, snow and other weather-related elements affect only the excavation and pouring of the foundation of a home built indoors, as well as final landscaping, but not construction. Since these builders are not significantly affected by weather delays, a move-in date can be nailed down well in advance to help you plan for the big day. Regardless of what type of builder you're considering, ask your builder what he or she does to ensure that your move-in date is guaranteed, and what possible impacts there might be that would delay the move-in date. This is important since there can be costs for you when a move-in date slides, in the form of interest from aging construction loans.

## **❑ Will this builder keep structural integrity in mind as a top-priority during the building process?**

Homes that are built to last use a structurally-engineered system to tie the foundation, deck floor, walls and trusses together to create a rock-solid structure. Ask your prospective builder if this is true for his or her company. When asking about structural integrity details, you can inquire whether the following are true for the builder:

- Do you use metal straps to tie together the foundation and the deck? (Deck refers to the horizontal flooring system of your home.)
- Do you use "hurricane ties" to connect the walls to every truss in the roofing system?
- What type of studs do you use and how far apart are they when you construct the walls? (Top-quality builders use 2" x 6" exterior wall studs (16" on-center), which are covered with full structural OSB sheathing. This type of exterior wall system has less vibration and movement in the wind and will be more sound-proof.)

## **❑ Will this builder help me design my home around the needs of me and/or my family?**

It is wise to look for a builder who offers a variety of floor plans to choose from as your starting point. To make your home your own, you'll want to customize with many options, colors, fixtures and finishes. And, for the ultimate in customization, ask your builder if they'll start from scratch or work from your existing plans.

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## **❑ Will this builder make it easy for me to select the exterior and interior finishes for my home?**

Your builder should be able to help you select nearly all of your interior and exterior finishes, fixtures and colors. Look for top-quality standard brands such as Kohler® and Certaineed®, and high-end options like solid surface or granite countertops. Your builder should make it easy, so you won't have to run around visiting suppliers all over town to collect samples and make decisions. Ask the builder to explain their process for selecting fixtures and finishes and what they can do to help make it easy for you.

## **❑ Can this builder deliver all of the benefits that come with a new home versus a used home, and ensure that I will be satisfied with my choice?**

Customer satisfaction is what makes or breaks a builder. It is critical when selecting your builder to get feedback from previous customers. Ask your builder for the names of recent buyers so that you can hear for yourself what they think about their new home.

Do you have more questions? We have the answers! Visit us online to “Ask the Experts” at [www.buildrightinstitute.com](http://www.buildrightinstitute.com) or email your questions to [experts@buildrightinstitute.com](mailto:experts@buildrightinstitute.com).