

One Homeowner's Lessons Learned After the Home Construction Process

Recently, I interviewed a homeowner who had just finished building their dream home with a reputable custom homebuilder in Houston, TX. I asked this person questions about their home construction process, and about what they would have done differently if they were to go through the process again.

Homeowner Q&A

Q: What was your first step when your family decided to build a custom home? Very first thing you googled. And what came next.

A: We researched, "custom home builders in the Houston area." We reached out and talked to 28 different builders to get a sense of who could do what we wanted, and who seemed to have a good track record of building truly custom homes.

Q: Why a custom home rather than a semi-custom or production home?

A: We knew we wanted to buy in an acreage community where a production home was likely not a real option. We also knew we wanted several key details that we weren't finding in any semi-custom plans (single story, trusses, bedrooms all spread out, etc.)

Q: Do you remember how you felt going into this journey? Were you hesitant? Any fears?

A: We were nervous in general since we had never built a custom home, and most of what you read online are horror stories. We thought we were doing our due-diligence by taking the time to research and talk to dozens of builders, but we didn't really know what to look for.

Q: Were you skeptical about any of the builders, or perhaps all of them?

A: All.

Q: Did you encounter any builders that felt disingenuous?

A: None seemed obviously disingenuous, but we ruled out several due to lack of timely responsiveness or lack of competence/experience doing what we wanted.

Summary

Building a home is a significant investment. And in order to feel 100% confident going into the home construction process, it's important to do a thorough investigation into your potential builders. It takes years of experience in the industry to be able to know the right questions to ask as well as who to ask. As a home construction consultant with home building experience, I can ensure that the builder you choose checks all of your boxes. Signing on the dotted line is a big deal, and I want to help you make the best choice for you.



Homeowner Q&A

Q: Is there something you wish you'd done differently? At what point would you have made a different decision if you were starting all over again?

A: I wish we had requested to know who our construction manager (superintendent) would be ahead of signing the building contract. I also would have probably interviewed and talked to more people on the team that I'd be working with daily and reached out to more prior (recent) clients.

Q: What were the questions you asked when you contacted references?

A: I asked about overall experience, if budgets were met, quality of work, and how warranty issues were handled.

Q: Would you have benefited from a client advocate or client representative during the process of hiring a builder? Checkout my [services and package guide](#) for reference.

A: Yes, I think so. While I'm quite "type A," so I did a lot of this myself, it would have been really helpful to have someone with knowledge/industry experience to help me cover all of the bases as an additional checkpoint in working with the builder.

Q: Were expectations established?

A: Not as clearly as they should have been. This is one thing I'd recommend discussing in more detail; expectations on both sides of the homeowner-builder relationship.

Summary

Even the most organized people can unknowingly let things fall through the cracks. This homeowner assumed they were on top of their home construction project, but without experience, they can never truly know or catch every detail. Having an experienced advocate in your corner will put your mind at ease during your home construction and ensure that the proper expectations are established.



Homeowner Q&A

Q: Were expectations met?

A: This is a loaded question. Overall, our expectations of the builder were not met. We ended up with a beautiful home that we love, but we feel that a lot of credit for that goes to the countless hours and nit-picking we put into the process.

Q: Was there a recurring meeting set in place to review your project progress?

A: At the beginning (pre-construction) there was a pretty regular meeting cadence, then it was more ad-hoc as construction got going. I think I would have benefitted from a regularly scheduled meeting with the team rather than feeling I had to request meetings all the time.

Q: Did you ever feel like you had to defend your point or perspective on things?

A: Yes, I think the custom home builder should work to understand and align on each individual homeowner's vision. I don't feel like my builder did that on several details of my home, which caused re-work and dis-satisfaction on both sides.

Q: Were you ever overwhelmed with the jobsite progress?

A: Yes, there are infinite details and decisions in the custom home construction process. I often felt overwhelmed with all the moving parts, and I was nervous at the incompetence/lack of experience of some of the construction team.

Q: As you received invoices to be paid did you look through every single invoice? Did you ever say to yourself ‘what the heck am I looking at’? Did you dispute any invoices that came through?

A: I tried! There were SO many... hundreds and hundreds of pages, many with short-hand or unclear descriptions. I questioned a few and got good feedback from my PM and accountant, but with the pure volume of work going on, I’m sure things were missed.

Summary

It’s important to discuss your expectations with your builder and vice versa. That way, you can go into your home construction confident that your builder knows what you expect throughout your project and as an end result. And, when it comes to invoices, you should have an expert review them, someone who doesn’t profit by you overpaying or double paying. Let’s ensure you are covered on your end.



Homeowner Q&A: Bottom Line

Q: Lessons learned?

A: Set very clear ground rule expectations from the beginning to make sure the builder is a good fit. It will be different for each person, but I should have made it clear that I wanted a truly custom home, down to every detail. My expectation was that these “details” were assumed to be part of the “custom” build process, but the builder often assumed the details would fall into place at a later time, which led to unsatisfactory results on certain parts of the home.

Q: Advice to anyone who is about to embark on this homebuilding journey.

A: Even with a reputable builder, it will very likely take a LOT of time and effort to QC everything and ensure the builder is working on your behalf. It's a business and they will do what's best for them. This client representative niche is a necessary one that would have saved some of my sanity and probably will end up saving the homeowner more \$\$ than it costs.

Summary

Again, building a home is a huge investment. For many, it's the largest sum of money you'll spend in your lifetime. Adding another expense to the pile may sound unnecessary at first, but having a home construction advisor in your corner can actually save you more money than it costs to hire one.

If you're just starting your home building journey in Houston, TX, consider hiring a residential construction consultant. Having an experienced advocate on your side will make the process much less stressful.

If you'd like to connect, or if you have questions, please feel free to fill out [my contact form](#). Or, if you're ready to schedule a discovery call, [click here](#) and select a day/time that works best for you. I'm looking forward to speaking with you!