



Mid-Shores Home Builders Association Inc.
Celebrating 15 Years! 1998-2013

Buyer's Guide

As we celebrate New Homes Month, the choice of a builder is likely the most important decision in the custom homebuilding process. Choosing a builder early in the process – ideally before you've settled on a site or design for your home – can set the stage for a successful home-building experience.

Choosing a builder early on is a good idea because the process is so complex that most owners need professional guidance from the beginning to avoid mistakes in site selection, home design and written specifications. Your budget probably shouldn't be among the top criteria in selecting a builder. No builder can quote an accurate price for a custom or semi-custom home until he or she knows the type, style, finishes and features of the home, the site conditions and the type of contract you want to use for construction. Rather than focusing on cost, you may want to base your decision on the builder's competence, reputation, professionalism, warranty coverage and experience.

Here are a few items to consider:

1. Determine the Type of Builder

Custom Home: A truly custom home is one that is designed from scratch to be built on a specific site and purchased by a specific buyer. Price doesn't determine whether a home is "custom." That adjective applies whenever the home has an original and unique design.

Semi-Custom Home: A semi-custom home starts with an existing home design, which then is modified - sometimes substantially – to fit the site where the home will be built and the individual home buyer's needs.

Production Home or Model Home: A model is built according to a standardized plan. Buyers do not have many opportunities to change or customize a production home within a subdivision.

Spec Home: A home built "on speculation" by a buyer who hasn't identified a specific builder but hopes to sell it during construction or shortly after it's completed. If a buyer decides to purchase the home during construction, he or she probably will be able to request some degree of customization. A spec home can be a custom home, a semi-custom home or a production home.

2. Reputation

Look for an established builder with an extensive client list.

3. Area of operations

Choose a builder who is familiar with the area where you want your home to be built. Local knowledge is important because residential construction is very regional in nature. An out-of-the-area builder might not be prepared to handle variations in local building codes, subcontracting practices, inclement weather patterns or other factors.

4. Type of home

Select a builder who has extensive experience constructing homes in your price range and general design style.

5. Compatibility

Building a home is a highly personal and emotional experience. You'll want choose a builder with whom you'll feel comfortable.

6. Warranty

The builder should be willing and able to offer you a comprehensive written warranty on your new home.

7. Financial stability

Make sure the building company you select is financially viable.

8. Financial strength

Success in the homebuilding business is earned by building a quality product at a fair price. A builder who is financially successful likely will still be in business during the warranty period for your new home. Further, successful builders are in the best position to contract for the services of top subcontractors and suppliers – the people who will actually build your home.

9. Quality

Beyond these factors, the most important consideration is the quality of the builder's homes. Cost is not a direct measure of quality. Rather, good quality is the merging of good design with appropriate products and materials that are installed with superior workmanship. The most expensive window might not look or perform any better than a substantially less expensive window. But improper installation of that window will diminish its quality, regardless of its cost. Generally, costly finishes and fixtures won't offset shoddy application or installation.

10. Do Your Homework

If you are in the market for a new home, condo, duplex, or townhouse, you should shop for your builder as carefully as you shop for the items to fill your home. Don't hire just any contractor listed in the yellow pages. Search the Mid-Shores Home Builders Association's Member Directory to find appropriate contractors.



PO Box 125 | New Holstein, WI 53061
midshoreshomebuilders.com