

## **Choosing Your Home Builder**

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Congratulations—you've decided to build a new home! However, once you've made this life-changing decision, your options may seem daunting. Where exactly do you want to live? How many bedrooms do you need? How much do you want to spend? Most importantly, whom do you want to build your home?

The first step in finding your builder is to decide what type of home you want. Would you prefer a custom home, or would you rather work with a production home builder? Custom home builders generally build one-of-a-kind houses, usually on land you own. They generally build 25 or fewer homes annually, and focus on high-end, single-family homes. Some custom builders also may offer design/build services.

On the other hand, production home builders generally build on land they own using stock plans, though they usually offer a variety of plan choices and options. Production builders are frequently large-volume builders (more than 25 homes per year), and build all types of housing at various price points.

### ***Make a List***

Once you have determined which type of builder suits you best, you can narrow your search. Contact your local builders association to obtain a list of builders who construct homes in your area. If you are unsure about how to contact the builders association in your area, visit the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) Web site at [www.nahb.org](http://www.nahb.org) and click on the heading "Resources" then "Find Your Local Builder's Association." You may also want to visit [HomeBuilder.com](http://HomeBuilder.com), NAHB's new homes listings Web site.

Another good resource is the real estate section of your local newspaper. Leafing through ads and reading articles can help you to learn which builders are active in your area, the types of homes they are building and the prices you can expect to pay. Make a list of builders who build the type of home you're looking for in your price range.

Local real estate agents also may be able to help you in your search. Ask friends and relatives for recommendations. Ask about builders they have dealt with directly, or ask them for names of acquaintances who have recently had a good experience with a builder.

## *Research and Ask Questions*

Once you have a preliminary list of builders, how can you find out about their reputations and the quality of their work? The best ways to learn about builders is to visit homes they have built and talk with the owners and to visit homes that are currently under construction.

Ask builders on your list for the addresses of their recently built homes and subdivisions; they may even be able to provide names of some homeowners who would be willing to talk with you. Drive by on a Saturday morning when homeowners may be outside, introduce yourself and say you are considering buying a home from the builder who built their home.

In most cases, a builder's previous customers will be open with you. Try to talk to at least three or four homeowners in each neighborhood. You should not rely solely on the views of only one person. Ask questions like: 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? Usually, people will tell you if they are pleased with their homes. And whether they are or not, they'll probably want to tell you why. Take notes so you can make comparisons later.

When examining a home, look at the quality of the construction features. Inspect the quality of the cabinetry, carpeting, trimwork and paint and never hesitate to ask the builder or the builder's representative your questions. What seems like an insignificant question might yield an important answer.

Remember that cost is not a direct measure of quality. High quality combines good design and fine products and materials with superior workmanship and proper installation. Just because one home is less expensive than another does not mean it is a better value. Likewise, a more expensive home may not mean better craftsmanship.

When buying a new home, you are not buying just a structure. Along with the structure comes a package of services, and the quality of those services will have an important effect on your enjoyment of your home. For instance, most homes come with a one-year warranty on workmanship and materials. Since virtually every home is going to need at least minor adjustments and repairs of warranty items during the first year, you should look for a builder who will provide quality service after the sale.

Some other questions you might ask builders are:

- How long has the company been in business?

- Whom do you contact for customer service after the sale? Should requests be in writing?
- Who will be responsible for correcting problems with major appliances?
- Does the builder belong to the local builders association (affiliated with the National Association of Home Builders)?
- Does the builder use state-of-the-art energy features? Equipment, insulation, design and landscaping can all affect a home's energy efficiency.

A home is one of the largest and most important purchases you can make. If you do your homework, ask questions and come prepared, you will develop knowledge and a sense of confidence that will help you to make the right decision. If you have any questions about selecting a builder, contact the Jackson County Builders Association at 706-367-0611 or [jcbuilders@windstream.net](mailto:jcbuilders@windstream.net).