



## The Ebb and Flow of Building or Remodeling a House

The construction of a new home or an addition to an existing home has a particular pace, moving from dramatic progress in the early stages to a more precise and ordered type of activity as finishes are applied later on. It is important to understand and appreciate the natural pace of construction in order to manage expectations and to ensure overall satisfaction.

### Building Success 101

*Q: What's the paper-like wrapping I see on new homes before the exterior siding goes on?*

A: It is increasingly common for quality-conscious builders to add an extra layer of weather protection around the outside of the house. Called an air barrier or "housewrap," this layer is installed as a continuous material just behind the siding, stucco, or brick finish. The housewrap provides a barrier blocking the exchange of air through the structure, thus reducing heating and cooling costs. Housewrap also blocks moisture from getting into the walls where it can damage the insulation and framing.

Early in the project, the building process shows almost daily progress. As the foundation goes in and the structural frame rises, the three-dimensional shape of the house takes shape. Now, the house is tangible, as room sizes and locations on the floor plans become obvious. After the long planning and permitting stages, our clients are justifiably excited to see their home become a reality. Mentally, they begin to unpack and arrange furniture.

However, the beginning phases of construction happen faster than the finishing stages. In the beginning, large-dimension components, such as the wall studs and roof rafters, are assembled into three-dimensional forms. Where once there was nothing, now there is a room! The electrician, plumber and heating contractors may also be present to install -- or "rough-in" -- their respective in-wall systems before the newly framed areas are filled with insulation and covered over with drywall. The job site is a hive of activity with major changes every day.

Similarly, the installation of windows and doors, roofing, and siding materials occur almost as quickly as the home's foundation and structural frame, resulting in a nearly finished exterior shell. It is a very encouraging time for everyone involved.

From that point, however, the pace begins to slow as the project moves from the "rough" to the finishing stage. Progress continues but gives way to more subtle and complex improvements.

Although the placement of insulation and drywall occurs quickly, producing the shape of the finished room, the process of taping and texturing the raw surfaces to make them ready for paint, wallpaper, or other textures is necessarily slow. A drywall contractor may require a week or more to properly prepare an entire house. Because of the nature of that work, few other contractors can work during this phase of the finishing process. Thus, the 'buzz' of activity of the earlier phases is greatly reduced.

Typically, from this point to a home's completion, the various trade contractors that once worked side-by-side must now operate in sequence. Carpenters, for instance, install the cabinets and countertops before the appliances and plumbing fixtures can be connected and finished. Meanwhile, the painting contractor waits for the trim carpenters to finish before he can cover their work and that of the drywall crew. And imagine how many faceplates, switch plates, light fixtures, and other finishes may need to be fastened in place to complete the electrical system of a large home, not to mention carpeting and other floor finishes, tile work, and plumbing fixtures.

The meticulous rate at which this stage of construction occurs can test the patience of any homeowner. To help ease any anxiety or mystery, we schedule frequent opportunities to walk through the home with our clients in order to point out the gradual progress going on in the later stages of construction. Understanding the pace of homebuilding, from dynamic beginnings to the precision of completion, helps our clients establish realistic expectations as they look forward to their completed home.

Warm regards,

*Richard*

Richard Dickson  
**Dickson Development  
Corporation**  
666 Plainsboro Road, Suite 1300  
Plainsboro, NJ 08536  
**(609) 799 0220 - phone**



[info@dicksondevelopment.com](mailto:info@dicksondevelopment.com)  
[www.dicksondevelopment.com](http://www.dicksondevelopment.com)

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