



Building Success 101

Q: How do you measure square footage?

A: In fact, there is a lot of debate, and no set standard, for measuring a home's square footage -- which is part of what makes a cost-per-square-foot calculation between two homes so difficult to ascertain. Are you using the dimensions of the exterior outline of the house, or interior room dimensions (the difference being the thickness of the walls, which can add up)? Does the calculation distinguish between conditioned or unconditioned space? Does it include the garage or basement or unfinished areas? Until you define how

The Cost Question

A question we get all the time is "what's your price per square foot?" The perception (or presumption), we assume, is that if you wanted to add or subtract a few square feet for whatever reason, you simply add or subtract that amount per foot from the price or cost of the house.

Simply, in our business, it doesn't work that way. For us, it's an impossible question to answer without a lot more information and detail, and one that can only be derived once the house is finished and all costs have been accounted for. Before that, it's akin to asking, "How much does a vacation cost?" without first knowing where and for how long you plan to go, and by what mode of transportation, among other considerations.

The fact is, the details (and therefore cost) of every house -- even those built on speculation by large-volume builders -- is different, and the cost of your house is entirely up to you, not your builder. Only you know how much you can afford and what you want in your new home. It's our job to apply our expertise and experience to finely detail your wants and needs and then build a home that meets (or ideally exceeds) those expectations while remaining within your budget.

That's why it is so important to determine and then share your budget with us from the first moment you select us to build your home. Budget information should precede any talk of contracts or actual construction. Using the vacation analogy, we are like a travel agent working with you to plan a trip.

Still, the square-foot cost question persists. So, it might be helpful to understand what goes into or affects the cost (or ultimate price) of a new home to gain a better perspective on the question.

For instance, the costs of similarly sized homes can vary considerably due to their location (and even size and shape of the lot within the same neighborhood), the outline of the building, the type of and complexity of the foundation and roof, and many other construction and design characteristics that are not directly related to the square footage of the house.

In addition, costs including development impact fees and permits, or state and municipality mandated code requirements, can add from a few thousand to tens of thousands of dollars to the ultimate cost of a new home, regardless of size. Labor and material costs also can vary substantially based upon the time of year, availability and demand of

to measure square footage, comparing costs per square foot is even more irrelevant.

building materials and workers, weather conditions, and the complexity of the project.

The list of variables goes on, and we're happy to discuss them with you and explain how they might impact the cost of your new home. But, in our view, it's short-sighted to ask us up-front what our homes cost per square foot, and certainly to base one of the most important decisions of your life on that metric alone.

Better, we think, to get a full understanding of our process and expertise and marry those skills with what you can afford and want and need in a new home to achieve your goals.

Warm regards,

Richard

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



info@dicksondevelopment.com
www.dicksondevelopment.com

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