

Choosing Your Project Professional…New Home Builder versus Remodeler

Recently we've been seeing and hearing about an increasing number of new-home builders dipping their toes into remodeling as a way to generate cash flow during the current economic downturn. Their pitch to homeowners is that they possess a more sophisticated knowledge of experience and business savvy than a typical remodeling contractor.

This may be the case with the stereotypical fly-by-night contractor, but certainly not a professional company like ours. We have built our business to support, and are dedicated to, handling the complexities and unique circumstances of sophisticated residential remodeling and home improvement projects.

For instance, how many new-home builders are prepared to deal with the inevitable surprises that crop up during a remodeling project? Our staff is trained to thoroughly investigate the existing conditions of your house, identify likely or potential issues that might be hidden behind the finishes, and budget for them -- a far cry from the controlled circumstances of a new-home building site and process.

Unlike builders, we also understand how to work with an existing floor plan and exterior details to make a room addition both aesthetically and functionally satisfying to a client. The goal is to make the addition appear to have been part of the original house, a result that requires a keen eye and, more important, the experience of having done it successfully over time with a variety of house styles. This is a competency few new-home builders possess.

We are also skilled in finding historically or period-accurate materials and finishes to match that of an older home, from windows and porch railings to doorknobs and bath faucets. Many of these sources are small businesses, some of them located outside of our area. Few, if any, new-home builders have access to these resources.

Finally, unlike home building, different remodeling projects require specialized skills and experience to make them successful. Sure, new homes are different in size and their level of finish, but they are all still new homes. By contrast, a room addition, basement conversion, or kitchen makeover are unique. Add the complexities of historic preservation or restoration work after a fire or flood and you are facing projects that require true specialized skills and experience.

To suggest that a homebuilder with little or no experience in any type of remodeling can tackle all types of home improvement projects and perform better than a specialized professional remodeler, flies in the face of logic and a homeowner's intelligence.

Our expertise also encompasses a higher level of customer service. While builders can be very good at selling homes, much of what they build is on speculation; in other words, without a homeowner alongside from project inception to completion. As a result, a builder is more or less insulated from his eventual buyer for the majority of the project.

That's a completely different model than home remodeling. We work directly with our homeowner clients from the start and usually do the work while they remain in their homes. Our crews and our trade partners (subcontractors) are accustomed to working in those conditions. They understand and respect the stress it can put on a family. That's critical to maintaining good communication among all parties and helping ensure a successful result.

Combining expertise in specific types of remodeling work and an intimate knowledge and respect for the process and its effect on our clients, it is clear that remodeling contractors are better suited to home improvement work on any scale than a new-home builder.