

FINDING AND QUALIFYING A BUILDER FOR YOUR YANKEE BARN HOME

Finding the right builder for your project is a critical step. Your General Contractor is going to play a central role in organizing and coordinating your building project, finishing your house on time and managing the project expense. Your building project will go far more smoothly if you are able to find a General Contractor that you trust and you feel will be a good partner.

Yankee Barn Homes provides the following guidelines to clients searching for a General Contractor.

1 FINDING BUILDER CANDIDATES

Yankee Barn Homes maintains a database of builders that have built other Yankee Barn homes or have been added by strong reference. Yankee Barn Homes DOES NOT make specific recommendation so as to not to sway the client's decision. However, Yankee Barn Homes will gladly provide a list of possible candidates from our database of experienced builders.

In addition to this list, we also suggest that you:

- Ask your new neighbors-to-be who they might recommend.
- Drive around in the area and look for construction on similar homes. Stop and ask for the builder. If he or she is not interested, ask them for other names.
- Call the local Home Builders Association. Most have comprehensive websites, too. Order their literature now.
- Check at local lumber yards. Ask for contractors' names. Often, they will have a bulletin board where builders post their business cards.
- Check the Yellow Pages for contractors or builders.
- Contact a Construction Loan representative at a local bank to ask for recommendations.
- Check with the Construction Manager at Yankee Barn Homes for further assistance.

2 CONTACTING BUILDER CANDIDATES

Speak with two or three builders. Many builders are very busy and may be reluctant to set a meeting date. Be prepared to talk on the phone about your build schedule, land location and description, and have a comfortable understanding of the Yankee Barn Homes Shell Package. You must make time for these meetings. Set them up now.

When requesting a meeting, emphasize this is a post and beam home of panelized construction, the Shell Package is up and weather-tight in 15 to 20 days and a Yankee Barn Homes Construction Supervisor works with the General Contractor's crew to erect the shell.

This is a very good time to involve Yankee Barn Homes in the discussions. Yankee Barn Homes is happy to speak directly to the General Contractor to answer any questions s/he has about the Yankee Barn Homes Shell Package.

3 DO NOT GO TO THE MEETINGS EMPTY-HANDED

Prepare for the meetings so you can make the most of each one. If possible, have the following available for each builder:

- Bring the decision makers. Never schedule a meeting without the decision makers present.
- Plans. Progress Plans will be fine at the initial meetings.
- Yankee Barn Homes Shell Package Specification Report. To compile an accurate estimate and project schedule, builder candidates will need to know what components will be supplied with your Yankee Barn Homes Shell Package versus those that s/he will be supplying.

- Your Proposed Building Timeline. Keep in mind that a good builder may be booked six months in advance. However, the Design Process with Yankee Barn Homes can take three to six months for plans, meetings, revisions and production. In most cases, these two time lines run parallel to make most efficient use of the client's time. During this time, if you have a task to do, do it right away. If you have a decision to make, make it and let the stakeholders know.

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WHAT TO LOOK FOR WHEN SELECTING A GENERAL CONTRACTOR.

To select a builder, begin by thinking about yourself. What kind of customer are you? What is your knowledge or understanding of home construction? Discuss these points with the contractor candidates. Also consider:

- Did s/he return your phone calls promptly and is s/he "reachable"?
- Was s/he prompt for all appointments?
- How did the candidates present themselves? Did s/he seem knowledgeable and informed? Was s/he prepared?
- Do you feel confident in this person? The right candidate should provide intelligent ideas, creativity and ask questions that lead to decisions.
- Do you actually like the candidate? A good contractor should not be pushy, arrogant or intimidating. Choose a candidate that listens to your ideas. Choose someone that is reasonably relaxed but keeps the meeting moving and on subject. Try to keep an open mind and listen to suggestions. You are the major decision maker, but a good part of what you pay a contractor for is his/her expertise.

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THE WELL-PREPARED CONTRACTOR

A good contractor should bring:

- A certificate of insurance. A specific copy with your name on it should be provided if you have awarded the contractor the job.
- Any licensing information (if required in your state).
- References with names, phone numbers and job description.
- Optional - A copy of the contractor's contract and change order form. Some builders may also bring photo albums of other jobs that are similar in scale and detail.

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NEGOTIATIONS

When you are ready to talk pricing, make sure the quote and contract are as thorough as possible. Include material brand names and models, installed cost, the payment schedule, procedures for change orders and projected completion date. Yankee Barn Homes recommends a contracted price method for all construction.

Some contractors and customers prefer to use the "time and materials" method of building. This method works well if all billing is kept current and allows for delaying some of the finished detail selections until the "building space" is framed. Try to establish realistic allowances and stick to them. Yankee Barn Homes does not recommend this method, however the final choice is the homeowners.

Whichever method you settle on - Contract Price or time and materials - if the estimate comes in too high, all hope is not lost. Ask what can be changed or reduced to come closer to your expectations and budget. The big ticket items, such as site work, kitchens, baths, and HVAC are good places to start to look for reductions. Also, your Yankee Barn Homes designer will be an excellent source for help with this issue.

Exceptional quality is never inexpensive, but you do not get many second chances when building a home. Accurate pricing requires detailed information, specifications and input from suppliers and trade contractors. Done properly, compiling an estimate takes days to weeks. Buyers that do not understand the complexity of this process and the importance of clearly written, detailed specifications sometimes compare floor plans based on cost per square foot. For instance, buyers comparing two homes that each includes 4 bedrooms and 3 baths might find one built for \$175 per square foot and another for \$260 per square foot. However, the more expensive home should contain a level of quality, additional features and upgraded material justifying the higher cost.