



A good home inspector will be able to root out any deficiencies hiding in your new home.

New house, new issues

By Maggie Calloway

Most of us know it is essential to get a home inspection prior to buying a home; this essential step is to shield us from taking on someone else's nightmare. Among other things a home inspection should alert us to are deficiencies not just on the surface but hidden in the walls such as bad plumbing, electrical wiring, and heating and cooling systems. But we have all seen episodes on TV

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Design from the ground up

Building a custom home takes a lot more than just choosing the perfect location.

By Kerry Vital

Building a custom home can be a wonderful experience, but it can also be not for the faint of heart. If you're looking into building a brand-new home that is custom designed from the ground up, the first thing you need to do is find a reputable builder who has plenty of experience.

“Don't go for the cheapest or the one who just got started,” says Ivan Krpan of Dakota Holdings Custom Home Builders. “References are essential. Many people have had bad experiences, so it's really important to choose the right builder.”

When you're hiring a builder, it's very important to be comfortable with him or her, because you will have a lot of contact in the next several months. Krpan says it generally takes about 10 months from start to finish, so if you're not happy that time will be crawling by and you will be adding extra stress to your life on top of the usual emotions that come with any renovation.

“The builder must be willing

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If you're looking to reduce your environmental footprint, natural gas is a great way to do that. With increased energy efficiency and cost savings, homeowners who install a natural gas system will find many benefits.

Submitted photo

The comfortable choice: natural gas

Natural gas has become a popular choice in Canada, for a variety of reasons.

By Kerry Vital

Natural gas is rapidly becoming a popular way of powering your home, for a large variety of reasons.

One of the benefits of natural gas according to FortisBC is its convenience factor. Natural gas is available at the push of a button, so you don't need to worry about running out of fuel for your barbecue, or having to wait for your fireplace or

outdoor firepit to get hot. It is easy to find stylish and functional appliances that use natural gas, so homeowners never have to sacrifice their sense of style.

Imagine coming home from a long day at work and being able to sit in front of your natural gas-fuelled fireplace with a glass of wine, or toss together a gourmet meal for a dinner party with your gas cooktop or oven. That dream is easily made possible with a natural gas system.

One of the great things about a natural gas cooktop and oven is its ability to cook food evenly. You will no longer have to worry about burning one side of the pan while the other is undercooked.

Natural gas can also heat your hot tub or pool, which is especially important when it's cool outside. The water will be heated consistently and quickly, so your relaxation can begin almost immediately.

Canada is the world's third largest producer of natural gas, so it is an abundant source of energy, as well as being extremely popular. Natural gas meets 30 per cent of Canada's energy needs, according to FortisBC. It is also a cleaner type of energy, emitting almost 30 per cent less carbon dioxide than oil.

Another fantastic benefit to natural gas service

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Partial proceeds of all KitchenAid appliances sold at Coast in October will be donated to “Cook For The Cure”.

Details at www.coastappliances.com/cookfortheure.

Finding a level of trust is extremely important when choosing a home builder

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to spend time with them,” says Krpan. “They must be willing to assist (the homeowners) with colours, design and other plans.”

Once you’ve chosen a builder, you need to find the land you want to build on and know the regulations that are in place for the type of home you can construct.

“How a property is situated will (determine) what you can put on it,” says Krpan.

Once you’ve chosen where you want to build and purchased the parcel of land, it’s time to start looking at what you want to include in your new home, whether it’s a large kitchen perfect for entertaining or several bedrooms to fit your growing family.

“A good builder will help you look at what you should and shouldn’t do (in a home) as well as discuss your likes and dislikes,” says Krpan.

This is the perfect time to talk about your dream master suite or what you love about a friend or family member’s house. Those granite countertops and heated tile floors are important parts of the design puzzle, and your builder needs to know that you want them included.

“In most cases you will be working with a designer who works with the builder,” say Krpan. They will collaborate with you to lay out everything you want for your perfect home.

Once you have finalized your design and everyone is on the same page, it’s time to discuss how much it will cost and draw up a contract.

“It’s best to enlighten people about what the process is,” says Krpan. “Everything has a price tag attached.”

The contract you sign should include the square footage of the home, a total breakdown of the costs you will incur including the price per square foot and the quality of finishings that will be in the home.

“It should also include a payment schedule,” Krpan says.

“For example, I ask for 25 per cent to start. Then, another 25 per cent once the roof, doors and windows go on. The next 40 per cent would be required when the heating, air conditioning and electrical go in and drywall goes up. The final 10 per cent would be due once everything is finished and a final inspection is done.”

However, Krpan warns that even though you may have signed a contract stating how much you will be paying for your new home, if you come up with some new ideas mid-way through, there might be some extra costs.

“An example would be a high-end chandelier,” he says, adding that the homeowner would have to pay for that on top of the agreed-upon cost.

“You don’t want any misunderstandings between the builder and the customer,” Krpan says. “That’s why there needs to be a good contract in place. Having a contract keeps everyone honest and everyone understands the cost.”

You should also be given a construction specifications sheet when completing a contract. That sheet (Krpan’s are usually four or five pages long) will list the construction materials the builder will use.

“I list the important things,” says Krpan. “I’m not going to list the brand of concrete used or anything, but I will list things like the cultured stone for the front or the type of windows, for example. It’s important to protect both the builder and the customer.”

Being realistic about what you can afford is very important. You may have fallen in love with that huge granite soaker tub or opulent formal dining room you saw in a home decor magazine, but if it’s not feasible on your budget it may need to be put aside for the time being.

Your home is more than a place to rest your head. You should feel happy and comfortable in your new place, and knowing that this house was built exactly how you wanted it to be will go a long way towards making that possible.



Building a custom home can be a large undertaking, so it is important to find a builder you trust and are able to work with. Whether you want a large kitchen, glittery chandeliers or an opulent master bedroom, your options for the design of your new home can be limited only by your imagination and your budget.

Submitted photos

