

BY RON BOSHAW | PHOTOS PROVIDED BY BOSHAW RESIDENTIAL, LLC

BRICKS & \$TICKS

THE CALCULATED COST OF BUILDING A HOME



“WHAT WILL IT COST PER SQUARE FOOT TO BUILD MY HOME?”

This is one of the most common questions heard by custom home builders.

Imagine two bags of groceries sitting at the end of the checkout aisle. How much does each bag of groceries cost? The answer depends on what is in each bag. Steak, lobster and champagne or cold cuts and beer?

The cost of construction varies in many ways and determining a true cost to build per square foot needs to be evaluated from many different perspectives and truly depends on what is in the proverbial bag. Providing the client with the home of their dreams that meets the level of

quality and, of course, their budget takes a true understanding of all the facets of the project.

Custom home builders look at cost per square foot from different angles and try to work backwards in a sense. A homebuilder needs to understand what it is that you, as the client, want in your home and what you are comfortable spending on an overall budget and then break down the categories into wants, needs and must haves.

Some of the categories that affect the pieces and parts of the overall cost per square foot include:

HOME DESIGN Home designs in a full two-story fashion are typically more cost effective to build than a single-story home of the same square

footage. Smaller homes obviously have the tendency to cost more per square foot than larger homes as you are spreading costs over a smaller foot print. These are only a few factors in the home design process that affect the overall cost per square foot.

SPECIFICATIONS The “specs” are written documents outlining the materials, selections, and construction methods the home is designed to meet. Having full specifications for all the materials and selections is an excellent way to insure you get a full understanding of what your home will be and the costs associated. Architects can provide specifications as a part of their contract, or your builder can develop the specifications as the pricing exercise moves forward.





COST PER HEATED SQUARE FOOT This is the space where you live. The kitchen, bathrooms, bedrooms, great rooms, etc. This square footage cost typically includes both hard costs and finishes. Each client has a dream of the space they need and want. Managing this level of the design and construction is extremely important when it comes to the budget.

COST PER UNCONDITIONED SQUARE FOOT UNDER ROOF These spaces include porches, garages, storage areas, breezeways, etc. While not a conditioned living space, there are still costs associated with construction, materials, framing, painting and concrete. All the costs equate back in part to the “cost per square foot” concept.

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Understanding which category your particular wants and needs fit into will help the "cost per square foot" calculation make sense. Bricks and sticks costs are necessary to build the house. Allowances can be adjusted as you see fit.

BRICKS AND STICKS This term refers to the hard construction costs to build the home or the true materials and labor to build the structure before finishes.

ALLOWANCES This is a commonly used term to describe a budgeted amount set aside for the fun stuff. Cabinets, countertops, flooring, trim detailing, tile, plumbing and lighting fixtures. Understanding these costs along with the bricks and sticks costs will guide you into a strong understanding of the overall cost per square foot.

SOFT COSTS These expenses include architecture, landscape design, surveys, permits, community fees and builder overhead and profits. While some of these costs are not typically included in the cost per square foot to build they need to be included in the overall construction budget for the home

There are many pieces to be considered in calculating the cost-per-square-foot puzzle. A full understanding of each factor is essential to having confidence in your home design, construction quality, selections and budget. **LCH**

Ron Boshaw has over 25 years of building premier custom homes and renovations throughout the Lowcountry of South Carolina

