

Park Cities People

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The Interior Monologue: Preparing to Build Your Dream Home

A little research before you start can go a long way



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When building your dream home — or even remodeling your present dream home — nothing beats preparation and research as a solid base for your special project.

Here are some steps that might seem like common sense, but it's not until you actually begin — or, regrettably, make a mistake — that you'd catch yourself saying, "I wish I'd thought of that!"

As soon as possible, start clipping photos from magazines and newspapers of exteriors and interiors of favorite homes and vignettes.

Create an organized notebook of every detail you want to incorporate in your new home.

This notebook will be invaluable when working with your design consultants, such as architect, interior designer, landscape architect, and if budget allows, a lighting/electrical consultant.

Before hiring any of these design consultants, check them out thoroughly and verify they are licensed in their field of expertise.

Once those selections are made, make sure everyone understands your budget completely, so they can keep you within that budget.

Larry E. Boerder, one of Dallas' most admired architects, recommends a complete set of detailed drawings and specifications to each client, so they can get a total design concept and accurate bids from builders and subcontractors.

Larry recommends it is best to bring your interior designer on early in the project and I agree.

It is essential in space planning existing furniture, so clients can plan what they want to keep and see what is needed before the foundation is laid.

This way, if you desire a dining room to seat 12 with a buffet and china hutch, the interior designer can make sure there is ample room for your guests to be seated and served.

It is also essential to plan a furniture layout for each room so that the electrical outlets are in their right location, so there will be no dangling cords.



Courtesy Photo

This family room is anchored with a stone fireplace topped with antique Italian urns, an antique wood-carved box, and a plaque.

Make sure the floor outlet is under the sofa or table, not in a major traffic pattern or under a desk chair.

Also, window placement on the sides of the home can be adjusted to accommodate furniture placement in rooms.

The interior designer is the one who will be helping you to select all of the finish-out of your home, from paint color to decorative lighting fixtures, and make sure the whole home flows from room to room.

The next most important person to hire is your builder. Again, make sure you research their reputation in the field.

Talk to friends and friends of friends before you make this decision. Interview three to five.

Give your complete list of detailed drawings and specifications to at least three builders and let them bid out the home.

Make sure the builder you are interested in has built the size and quality of home you are considering.

Again, ask for a list of addresses of homes you can drive by and see and references to call.

Joe Kain, one of Dallas' premier builders, has given this excellent advice: "Do not commit starting the project until it has been bid, budgeted, and presented to you in an organized and understandable manner.

This estimated budget should be accompanied by copies of actual bids received from suppliers and subcontractors along with copies of bid parameters that were sent to each. This will provide a basis for accountability by those subcontractors and suppliers.

This estimated budget should be completed before entry into a construction contract as a general guideline and understanding related to cost.

In other words, count the cost as best possible before starting the project."

If the budget allows, a lighting/electrical designer consultant should be brought on board early.

Lighting designers know all the tricks to make your house that much more spectacular, like how to frame a painting with just the perfect amount of light and make the crystal sparkle above the dining room table.

A media expert may be necessary to plan the media room with a special place to house all the electronics, where to place speakers, just how large the screen can be, etc.

They also understand the importance of acoustics.

Last but not least is the landscape architect.

Again, get a list of projects so you can see the work they have completed in the past.

Make sure you tell the landscape architect and the architect of any trees you want to be sure to save.

The good news: A recession is a good time to consider building your dream home or making major renovations.

The design consultants are not as busy as they normally would be in a good economy, so they have more time to devote to your project.

Also subcontractors are not in such a hurry to finish your project and get to the next one.

So, start that notebook, do your research and you're on the way to success and building your dream home — the right way!

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