



Dreaming and Scheming

The design phase is the vital first step in constructing a new home.

| BY JOE HART

When we envision building a home, we tend to think of a construction crew swinging hammers. But before the first nail can be pounded comes an important first step, one that dictates virtually every aspect of the construction process: the home design.

This phase typically takes six to eight weeks (or up to four to six months for a complicated, larger home). But that's time well spent. A clear and intelligent design not only increases the quality of the final product, it also simplifies the rest of the very complicated construction process.

At Carl M. Hansen Companies, an Edina-based building and development company, the design process begins with a team meeting. Typically, says Marketing and Sales Manager Heather Hansen, this involves an architect, an interior designer, the builder and the client.

"If you have the right people at the table during the design phase, it prevents a lot of changes down the road," she explains. And that's important, because changes to the design can cost both money and time.

At the initial meeting and throughout the design process, these professionals are balancing three primary concerns with the owner: budget, lifestyle and the floorplan/style of the home.

Budget is especially important in luxury building. "Carl doesn't cut corners the way some builders might to achieve a price point that compromises quality," Hansen says. "And because quality is so important, he feels it's vital to communicate costs clearly and up front." By discussing the budget up front, the design team can create a finished product with the stamp of fine craftsmanship that still remains within the budget.

Equally important is gaining an understanding of the lifestyle of the family that will eventually live in the home. "We take time to figure out how they are going to live in the house," says Hansen. "Is it a place to look out at the views or do they have kids who want to play pond hockey?"

Once the budget and lifestyle are determined, the team can begin creation of a floorplan and style. Other factors come into play, such as site considerations, personal taste and building-code requirements. It can stack up to a lot of decision making on the part of the owner, but with the right team in place, that decision-making process can be made manageable.

"Some people want to build a new house, but the process seems too overwhelming and they don't want to be that involved," says Hansen. If that's the case, the company usually begins with an existing design and modifies it for the site. "It can help to have a starting point."

Even with that starting point, moving from design to a workable blueprint requires a plethora of decisions. "Our philosophy is to help homeowners make intelligent choices," says Carl Hansen, the company's owner. "It can be overwhelming, but when we guide them through the process and advocate for quality, it has a huge impact on the finished product." **AL**

This article is the first in a series following the design and build process of a luxury model home in Edina's West Ridge Farm.

proactive approach Well before the hammer hits the nail, the design process starts with a team involving the architect, interior designer, builder and homeowner.



Constructive Collaboration

Teamwork is a must when building a custom home.

BY JOE HART

Building any home is a complicated process. Building a *custom* home — one that exists only on paper and in the imagination of the homeowner — can be a real puzzle. No matter how detailed the blueprints and designs, surprises come up every day on the job site, and solutions require quick thinking and teamwork.

Custom homes are designed to meet the unique lifestyle of the homeowner. A home might be sited to take advantage of a spectacular view, built to include quarters for an aging parent or designed as an inviting space for entertaining. While it's easy to dream up a fantasy home for any lifestyle, it takes careful teamwork to turn that vision into bricks and mortar.

"Our contractors have to be proactive," says Heather Hansen, marketing and sales manager for Carl M. Hansen Companies, an Edina-based building and development company. "They have to have their brain involved and really be thinking about what they're doing — not just following the blueprint."

This proactive approach saves both time and money. Namely, it's easier (and usually more affordable) to address issues as you go rather than backtrack to fix problems from an earlier phase

of construction. Relatively minor adjustments to the blueprint can have a ripple effect, and if those changes aren't managed properly, unwelcome delays can result.

For example, in a recent Carl M. Hansen Companies construction project, the plumbers had to make a slight adjustment in the style of a shower drain. The new drain required a different style of tile, which can take six weeks to import. A less-experienced plumber might have overlooked the impact of the change, but in this case, the design team was immediately alerted and the new tile was right on time for installation.

Teamwork also relies on team members being up-to-date with the technologies in their product area. Technology built into today's custom homes would have been unheard of 10, even five years ago and influences product selections in homes and impact clients' lifestyles.

For instance, the Andersen Windows E-Series line with VeriLock hardware builds wireless security technology into window and door hardware. VeriLock can tell you not only if a window is closed, but if it's locked. And because it's wireless, there's no added labor or supplies to connect it to the home's security system. That

saves time and provides a flexible system that ensures a home is safe and secure.

"There are a lot of moving pieces," Hansen says. "When you work with professionals, they understand the impact of their work on the entire project. We can make adjustments quickly without affecting the overall design."

The result of that level of communication and teamwork is a unique home that's specific to the needs and desires of the homeowner, says Owner Carl Hansen. "That's the real difference with a custom home: You're translating a dream into a reality," he notes. "Our craftsmen are used to plans changing, so they are able to foresee issues and solve them before they become a problem down the road." [AL](#)

This article is the second in a series following the design and build process of a luxury model home in Edina's West Ridge Farm.

flexible build Knowing that plans likely will change enables custom homebuilders to react at a moment's notice.