

How Much Does it Cost to Build?

Pricing by the square foot is an educated guess; not the foundation for building an accurate project budget. Any square-foot estimate should be questioned and qualified; using it as a conclusive budget figure is one of the most common pitfalls in early project planning. Accurate budgets are more dependent on details than square footage.

Use this tool to identify some of the primary variables that will shape your new construction or renovation investment. The more items you check, the more 'custom' your budget becomes.

Consideration 1: Building Site (The Canvas)

The land dictates one of the invisible costs of your build. Before you design the house, you must account for the building site. The building site can have a massive impact on construction costs, yet it is often overlooked in early stages.

- Topography: Is the lot sloped/stepped (complex)? Is it waterfront?
- Soil Conditions: Has the soil been tested as unstable, rocky, or having high water tables?
- Utility Access: Do services (hydro, water, sewer) need to be added to the property?
- Access & Logistics: Is the site hard to access for heavy machinery and material deliveries?

Consideration 2: Architectural Design (The Complexity)

Design is more than just square footage. It will make a home unique and personalized but it is also the primary driver of complexity and associated construction costs.

- Building Shape: Is your building a multi-faceted structure instead of a standard cube? Does it include round or angled walls? Cantilevers and suspended volumes?
- Roof Geometry: Does your roof design include multiple ridges & valleys? Are there varying pitch heights and irregular hips?
- Volume: Are there higher ceilings, vaulted ceilings and/or open spaces with large spans?
- Structural Details: Does the design call for timber framing, steel or engineered lumber?

Consideration 3: Specifications (The Performance & Finish)

This is your trim package, if you will, where you can choose anywhere from “entry level” to “bespoke luxury” features & finishes.

- Building Envelope: Are you aiming for a high-performance, energy-efficient shell?
- Mechanical System: Will your home include heat pumps, heat recovery ventilators, or heated floors in lieu of a code minimum HVAC system? Advanced climate and smart-home integration?
- Millwork & Countertops: Have you prioritized high-impact items like custom cabinetry, built-ins, stone surfaces?
- Plumbing & Electrical Finishes: Are you looking for floating toilets or vanities? Linear or tile set drains? Floor-mounted or trimless/mud-in electrical outlets or lights?
- Interior Trim: Are you seeking flush-base or reglet baseboard detailing? Trimless doors and windows instead of traditional raw wood or painting wood trim? Coffered or tray ceilings?

Other Considerations?

This is just the tip of the iceberg. There are several other critical factors to consider ranging from municipal bylaw nuances to crew/subcontractor mobilization costs, etc. Many factors are not considered in a cost per square foot estimate and often go overlooked until they impact the bottom line.

Our thorough planning process can help you to figure out all the details that need to be taken into consideration in order to prepare for a smooth construction project. In collaboration with you and your designer we can help to optimize your design and specifications to maximize the value of your investment. Whether you have drawings in hand, or just early ideas, get in touch to learn more and see how we can help.

Schedule your free introductory consultation today.

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