



**A**

***Homeowners Guide To  
Understanding the Construction  
Process***

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## **A Homeowners Guide to: Understanding the Construction Process**

Over the years the building and remodeling industry has gone through many changes. Nowhere in the country has undergone more of those changes than South Florida. As the building codes have changed, in the wake of Hurricane Andrew, the process of construction from start to finish has become a web of bureaucratic procedures. As a general contractor starting a remodeling project on your home, we feel that there are some items that you should be aware of from the start to make the process as smooth as possible for everyone involved.

### **TEAM WORK**

The Key to A Successful Project

From day one we must work together as a team. The homeowner and the builder are equally important to the success of a project. From having plans drawn up, to picking out fixtures, lights, flooring, windows and everything else associated with your job, a constant give and take **MUST** occur between builder and client. Nothing can be assumed. No question is too small. There is no way for us to know exactly how, or what you would like if you do not communicate it to our office. There are many ways to do, or build, a particular item, but there is only one way that you want it done. Do not assume that an item will be finished in a particular way unless it is in writing. Even if a detail is on the plans, you must make sure that it is in the proposal. Being human means that we all make mistakes, and as a result, every now and then we may miss an element on the drawings. If something is missed in the specifications or on the proposal, you have not been charged for it, and it will cost you extra money during the course of the job. Please review your proposal and specifications very closely to be sure everything you want has been included.

### **Realistic Expectations**

Get on The Same Page

Even in the earliest stages of a project all of the components of the job must be considered. If, for instance, you decide that you want to add a bathroom and a master suite along with a new patio, you must be realistic about the budget that will be needed to complete such a venture. If the designed project is not financially viable, it will only waste everyone's time and leave you with either **(A)**: A set of plans that you paid for but are not able to use or **(B)**: disappointed in the finished product. If you are practical, there is always a happy medium between desire and necessity.

### **Knowledge is Power**

Do Your Research Then Have Patience

As a homeowner you must understand that every product used on the envelope of your home (i.e.: exterior walls, windows, doors, skylights, storm panels) must have what is called a **product approval**. (A product approval is a certification stating that the product, which is being used, is up to current code and hurricane construction guidelines as stated by the Miami-Dade County Building Code Compliance Office and or the Florida Building Code) It is up to the building department, and sometimes to the individual inspector, as to what is or is not required. Most times these are submitted with the permit application.

There are times when the building inspector will ask for additional paperwork on the job site thus causing a delay in the job. Also, inspectors can delay a job by requesting additional detail from the architect of record for any of a thousand reasons. They may not show up to do an inspection or may arrive onsite only to do the wrong inspection, due to the fact that it was entered into their system in the wrong way. Any and all of these things have happened to us in the past and they will happen again.

When setting appointments, it needs to be understood that there has to be a window for the contractor/sub-contractors to arrive at the jobsite. We always leave a thirty-minute window for traffic delays, breakdowns, or anything else that might holdup the contractors' arrival. Please allow the time window to elapse prior to calling the office to see if the contractor will be showing up, as the workman will arrive, most of the time, during the allotted time period. There are occasions however, when a contractor may show up late or not show up at all, again causing delays. Remember, yours is not the only job that the contractors are working on and sometimes a problem or delay on one job will cause a ripple effect on every other job in the system. Please be prepared for these situations, as they will most likely happen at some point during the course of your project.

There are also things that are out of our control such as illness, vehicle problems, the weather, material delays, and damaged products, when they are received. Missing parts or any number of things may go wrong whenever you special order items. When shopping for materials for your job, the store may be crowded and a short trip to pick up a few items may become an hour or more. You might decide that you want to change a piece after it has arrived. Again, this is time consuming.

## **Hitting What is Pitched**

### Dealing With Curveballs/Expect the Unexpected

Many times there are site unseen conditions that will change the course of the project in mid-stream. Also, you may decide that you want to change something after seeing how the project is coming together and that too, will add time, and cost, to the job.

Change orders are something that takes place on every job. Each time there is a change order there will be an additional change order fee. This fee is added to the actual cost of the change order itself. The reason for this is that it takes a lot of time and paperwork to make these things happen. It is never as simple as wanting something and having it happen with no effort. Someone in the office has to stop what he or she is doing and make your change order a priority in order to keep your job running smoothly. Setting up contractors to make the changes, checking with suppliers, making sure that the change you want does not create a problem in other areas. All of these things take time and as a result cost money. Those costs will be passed on to you, the homeowner. You should always presume that there will be an additional ten to twenty percent added to the cost of your job in change orders and site unseen conditions during the course of your project. Most change orders are not for items that are added by the builder, but are homeowner requested changes. Some change orders however, are required by the building department while others are for sight unseen conditions.

H.M.P. Builders, Inc. has become very adept at making changes while in the flow of a job, but it takes a team effort, between the builder and the homeowner, to make these changes happen as smoothly as possible. As soon as you have decided that a change needs to take place you **MUST** contact our office to let us know. We are not mind readers and even though you may have been thinking about a particular change for weeks, there is no way for us to know about it if it is not communicated to us. On that same note, if we have a question about what is or is not supposed to take place next, or what item has been selected for a particular part of the job, or any number of things that might arise, we will ask you for the answers to avoid H.M.P. Builders, Inc. from making a mistake on the jobsite. This holds true from the first meeting to the completion of the job. Also, when informing us of a change it is always best to do so in writing to avoid any misunderstandings. When we are asking you about a particular item during the course of the job, we will also confirm it, in writing, after the decisions have been made.

Please remember that we are not in an office, a factory, or a production setting. Your project is a one of a kind venture. No other renovation is exactly like yours. Things are being done to your home to make the new construction fit seamlessly into your existing space. This, as I am sure you can imagine, is not an exact science. Unexpected problems will arise. However, at the successful conclusion of your project, you will enjoy the finished product for years to come.

## **Knowing When to Get Involved**

### Choosing the Right Occasions to Speak Up

Being involved in your project is a very individual thing. Some people like to be on the sidelines and leave most things to the contractor. Other people like to be involved day to day. Whatever your preference, remember that there is a chain of command in every job, and if you request something of the workers on the job it may not be communicated to our office. Everything **MUST** go through our office **BEFORE** it goes to the workers on the site. It is for this very reason that you are reading this booklet right now and also why we have a pre-construction meeting. It is so important that we all be on the same page before the actual construction process begins.

When you have decided on the scope of your job, you will be asked to fill out a color selection sheet. The items on this sheet are **EXTREMELY IMPORTANT**. We cannot start a project until all items on the color selection sheet have been chosen. If we are not able to order the products that you desire for your renovation in a timely manner, we might find ourselves waiting for several weeks to several months for an item that should have been on the job long ago. Also, we may find that a selection you have made requires special cuts, installation, wiring, or some preparation that we should have been aware of and made provisions for, prior to the product showing up onsite. Once the product is onsite and there is a special need, we might find that there are many things that have already been done that should not have been done. In other words, a situation that could have been handled in about five minutes now requires five hours or five days. In a worst-case scenario, you have a situation that requires a change to plans or inspections that could delay the job even longer.

### **Vinyl or Tile or Wood**

#### This is no time to walk on eggshells

Another area that is very critical to the successful completion of a job is the allowances. An allowance is the amount of money that is included in your job cost as agreed upon by the homeowner and the sales representative, for items that will be included but are not yet selected. **(These are part of the color selection process and must be selected prior to the job start)** The allowance numbers are determined once you and your sales representative have discussed the items and budget for these specific products. As in all things, there are different levels of allowance items. You are free to choose low, medium, or high priced items for your selections. We will assist you in selecting allowance numbers that are realistic, but remember that the decision is ultimately yours. If you choose to allow a number that is too small to complete an item, we will advise you against it. Choosing a smaller number will just give you a false projection of what the job cost will actually be. Conversely, if you pick a higher number the price

of the contract for your project will be higher. If you pick out items that are less than the allowance, you will receive a credit. However, if you select products that cost more, you will be responsible for the difference. Please remember allowance items are part of the color selection sheet and as such, must be chosen prior to the start of the job.

## **Money Makes The World Go Round** And Keeps Your Job Running Smoothly As Well

Payment is an area that, for some people, is very difficult to discuss. Once a contract has been signed, there are stipulations on both sides that must be kept and respected. The purpose of the contract is to make sure that the homeowner gets what they desire and that the contractor performs up to expectations. One of the parts of the contract is the draw schedule, which dictates when funds are to be dispersed. If you have any questions or concerns about the draw schedule, please bring them up prior to the start of the job. When a draw is due, it is not the time to discuss changes in the payment timetable. Construction draws, for work completed, are the lifeblood of a construction company. Without timely payment, it creates a financial strain on the company and as a result will slow down or even stop the progress of a job. Also, please remember that remodeling is not like new construction. There will need to be some flexibility on when draws are due. This is because there will be times when everything that is supposed to be done for a particular draw is not yet done, however, two or three things for the following draw are already completed. This is a small example of when communication is essential. Also, you will receive something suppliers send out which is called a notice to owner. This is to inform the homeowner of the amount owed to them by the contractor for products and services used on your job. Once the contractor has paid the amount, you will receive a release of lien showing that the account on your job has been paid.

## **Get Ready** Because Here We Come

H.M.P. Builders, Inc. would like to thank you for taking the time to read these few pages. We know that your time is very valuable. We feel that in the end, having read this will make it easier for us to communicate before, during, and after your project is complete. We hope that you have gained a little insight as to the daily workings of the remodeling and renovation industry. Understanding the construction process can only serve you in a positive way and help relieve some of the stress that is associated with being involved in a construction project.