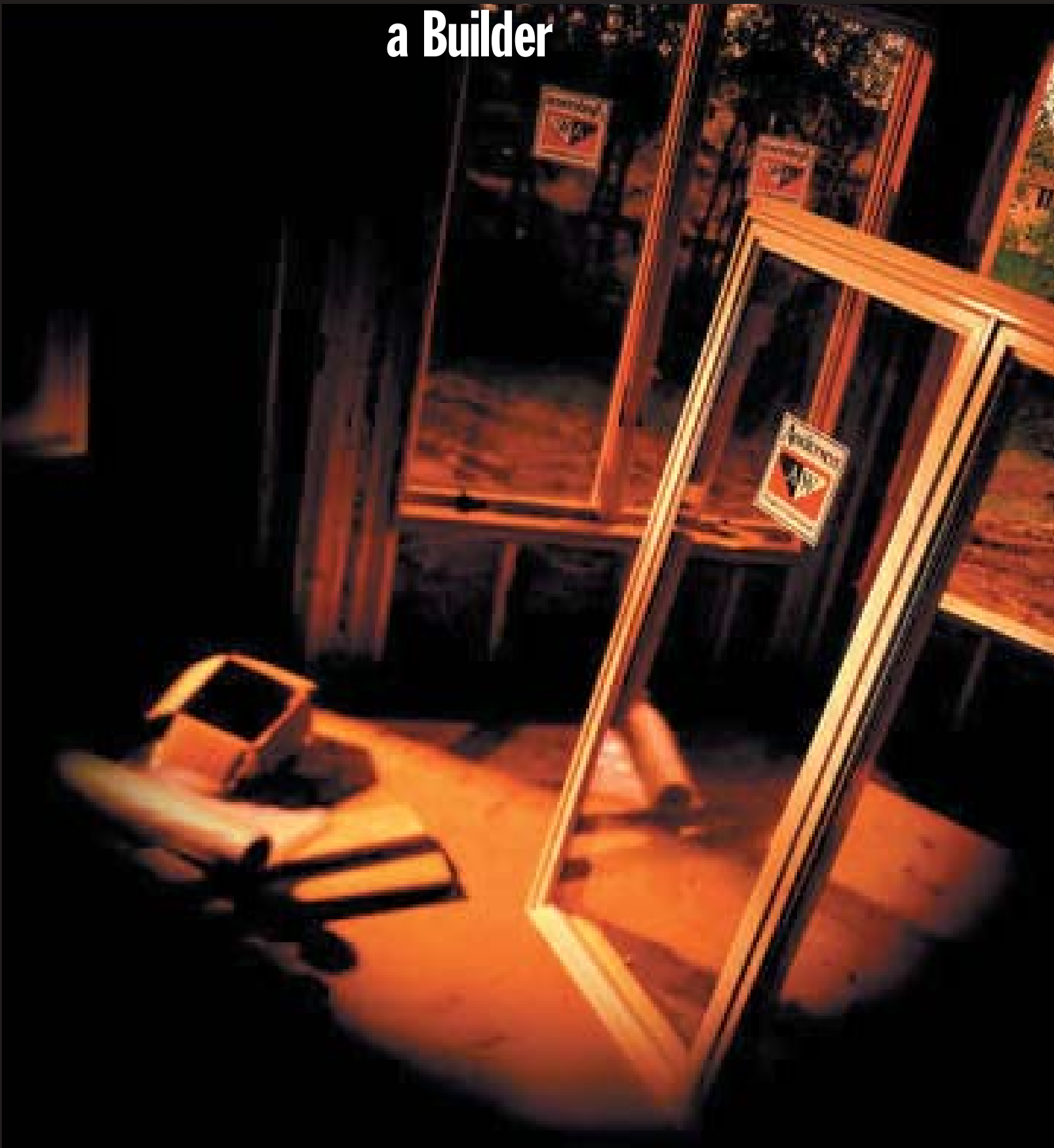


How to Choose a Builder



A Guide to getting the home you want

A custom built home. A townhouse. A home in a subdivision. A condominium.

If you're looking for a new home, you want it built by a reputable builder. You may be building from scratch. Or purchasing a pre-existing home. Either way, doing a little homework about builders now will help you make the right decision later.

Starting your search

Begin by listing builders who build the type of home you're looking for in your price range. The real estate section of your paper is a good place to start. So is your local home builders association. They can give you a list of the major builders in your area. Local real estate agents can also be helpful. Ask about builders with whom they've dealt directly and have had a good experience.

A little legwork

The best way to learn about builders is to visit the homes they've built. Ask the builders on your list for the addresses of their recently built projects. Builders may even be able to provide names of homeowners who would be willing to talk with you.

If you can't get a name, drive by on a Saturday morning when the owners may be outside doing chores. Introduce yourself and let them know you're considering buying a home from the builder who built their home. Ask if they're happy with their home. Did the builder complete the job as promised? On schedule? Would they buy from this builder again?

Usually, people will tell you if they're pleased with their homes. If they're not happy, they'll probably want to tell you why.

It's in the details

When examining a home, look at construction details. The cabinetry. Decorative moldings. Even the paint job. Is the work solid? Or were some corners obviously cut?



Don't be afraid to ask questions. What seems like an insignificant question may yield an important answer.

Think about value, not just price. Just because a home is less expensive than another doesn't mean it's a better value. Likewise, an expensive home doesn't assure higher quality.

Another important aspect of value is design quality. Will the home suit your lifestyle? Is there enough living space? Storage space? How much upkeep will be required? What about location? Is it convenient to transportation, shopping and schools?

Finally, while a home is primarily a place to live, it is also an important investment. Consider the appreciation potential of any home and the possible future influences that location, housing supply and demand, and other market factors will have on the value of your new home.

Warranties and service

Many builders back their own warranties on workmanship and materials for one year. Others offer warranties backed by insurance companies. Before you commit to a builder, have a clear understanding of your coverage should something go wrong. You'll also want to know about the service you'll receive after the sale. Builders typically make two service calls during the first year to repair non-emergency problems covered in the warranty.

Other important questions to ask builders include:

- *How long has the company been in business?*
- *Whom do you contact for customer service after the sale? Should requests be in writing?*
- *What responsibility does the builder assume for the work of the subcontractors? Who will be responsible for correcting problems with major appliances?*
- *Does the builder belong to the local builders association (affiliated with the National Association of Home Builders)?*
- *Does the builder use state-of-the-art energy features? Equipment, windows/patio doors, insulation, design and landscaping can all affect a home's energy efficiency.*

A final thought

The more knowledge you have about buying or building your new home, the more enjoyable the experience. If you have questions about selecting a builder that are not covered here, the home builders association in your area can help you find answers.

*Information used in this article provided by the
National Association of Home Builders.*

For helpful information on planning your building
or remodeling project, please visit the following sites:

www.nahb.org *(National Association of Home Builders)*
www.energystar.gov/products/windows
www.efficientwindows.org
www.andersenwindows.com

See your dealer for more information that will guide you
in getting the home you want.

