

## Ten pounds of groceries please....

By; Glen Van Orman

The dilemma of the ages; How do you get 10 pounds of groceries packed in a 5 pound bag? Today's meaning; "I have a budget to buy 5 pounds of home, but have about 10 pounds of ideas to squeeze in. Is there any way to make that possible?" It sounds like a tall order; however, we all try to accomplish this on an ever more frequent basis.

Today we have access to a myriad of ideas that weren't readily available to us in years past. With the local Parade of Homes, prolific publications on building and design ideas, cable TV shows on interior design makeovers & home remodeling and most importantly....the internet, it is common for consumers looking to build a custom home, to come into the design studio with an armload of information.

Normally, this is a good thing, because it shows that you have an idea of what you will want in your new home, it gives a point of reference, and it helps to convey to the designer or custom home builder what you have seen that you like.

The problem is, today there are so many ideas and opinions available to us, that we tend to go into what I'll call the 'Candy Store Mentality'. We want it all. We all fall into this at times. Add to that, friends, family, and neighbors are outspoken with ideas of what you should have in your new home. However, under it all is the unavoidable, inevitable b-word. **BUDGET.**

Design professionals and custom home builders, are constantly challenged with the task of fitting an ever growing grocery list of options into the available budget. It is our job to educate our clients that you just cannot fit 10 pounds of groceries into a 5 pound bag without something tearing at the seams. This education can be an especially tough job today. As a design professional, sometimes we have to explain how information is not knowledge,

More than ever before we are challenged to think 'outside the box', and that's fine, but there are still constraints that are absolutes. In most cases the budget is one of those absolutes.

We can design a great small home plan, but it is still a 'small' home. You cannot put 2500 square foot of living space and amenities in a home that has dimensions that add up to 2000 square feet.

Just like the grocery bag, something has to give.



So, in youthful parlance; "What gives?" It has to be either amenities or design. This is not news to most builders or designers. However, it may be news to you, if you haven't built before.

To properly service our clients, designers and builders must know the entire budget that will be imposed, and then we are charged to do our best, to design to this criterion. The hard part is; people are trained by life to not disclose what they intend to spend, for fear that the project will

be ‘priced up’ to meet the stated amount. As professional designers, we work very hard at changing this philosophy when it comes to building a home. When designing or building a custom home, the proposed budget needs to be balanced between the size of the proposed home or addition and the amenities that are requested.

Obviously, there is the chicken or the egg issue of not knowing exactly what the project will cost without complete plans and specs, and it’s not possible to produce plans & specs to exactly meet an arbitrary amount. However, we strive to know the basic market building costs for our geographic area, learn from our customer what you are looking for in your home, and then couple the two to the best of our ability. While designing, we need to continually remind our clients how amenities impact the final budget outcome, and adjust the design as may be required. Site demands, square footage, complicated roof lines, and other design complexities obviously have an effect on the project’s cost, but don’t forget the granite countertops, chef grade stoves, real wood entry doors, trim details, built-ins, and technologically advanced items such as; composite decking, high-tech HVAC systems, smart home wiring, and media systems.

It is important to try to ‘price check’ along the way at the preliminary design stage, and then alter course if need be to meet the budget. This is fairly easy for the designer to do, but generally more difficult for the end user to appreciate.

Designers are typically educated as to the approximate cost of popular options and we can give our clients advice on how their desires may or may not fit in with the overall plan and budget, before it gets to the building stage. It may not be easy to give up that new what-zit, but it might not fit in the bag.

Additionally, a designer can usually help you understand what the difference may be between Builder A, and Builder C’s, pricing and inclusions. Such as why you can’t “Just get that

‘little bit’ of craftsman trim included for the same price.” Even if you saw them do it on TV and it didn’t look like it took much to do. We can help justify why a builder can’t keep adding amenities at the same pricing and stay in business.

The best plan is to identify early on if you are someone who is more interested in large spaces for family or entertaining, or if you are more interested in trim details, and hi-tech add-ons.

Once the process and the budget are known, your design professional and builder are then able to better direct you as to the size and complexity of the design, to meet the overall criteria.

If you are looking at pictures of elaborate built-ins, or reading about that new insulation system or foundation wall you found on the internet, and at the same time talking about designing a home that is pushing the budget envelope for square footage and has a gotta-have-it-hip roof..... It’s time to talk about grocery bags.

If you are ready to design your next home project, please contact us and let us put our experience to work for you.



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**616-588-3201**

*See us at the;*

