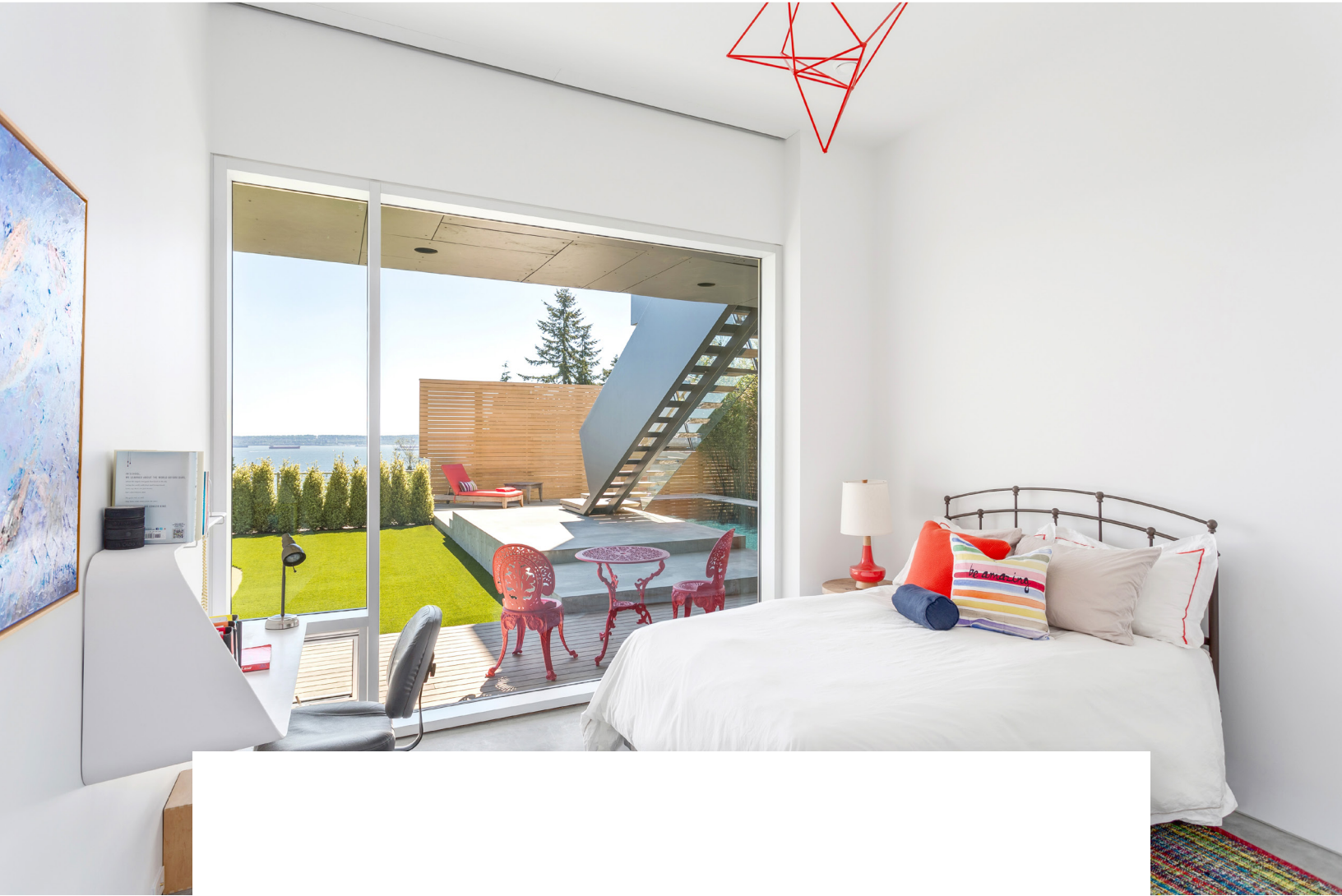




15 QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN INTERVIEWING CUSTOM BUILDERS



**YOUR DREAM
HOME AWAITS**



INTRODUCTION

When preparing to meet face-to-face with a shortlist of homebuilder candidates, you may be thinking and wondering about the best time to start reaching out to meet and interview. Quite simply, the most efficient method is either before you engage the architectural programming and design phase with an architect or designer or pretty much immediately afterward. Bringing a good project manager/estimator on board early will ensure that your home's design and your desired budget stay aligned throughout the process. However, there is much more involved in the process than just that. After you've narrowed down your list of potential custom home builder candidates to two or three, you can incorporate the questions below in the discussion meeting(s) to help you identify the very best partner for you and your beautiful family.



01 Are you a licensed homebuilder?

This is a good first question because anyone can put up website and advertise that they are a “homebuilder”. Here in BC a residential builder must be licenced to be able to apply for permits, construct, and warranty your new home. Licensing is obtained through BC Housing. To attain and maintain this license, the builder must demonstrate their competency. To learn more please click on the links provided

02 Are you member of the Home Builders Association of Vancouver?

This good second question because it indicates that the homebuilder is serious about what he/ she/they does. For a builder to even be a member they are required to go through a qualification process that weeds out the good from the great!

03 How closely do you work with my architect and interior designer, or can you help me find one?

Collaboration is the cornerstone. So, when selecting a builder, you want one who prioritizes a collaborative partnership with your architect and interior designer. This will prevent miscommunications that can lead to unnecessary tension, schedule delays, and extra costs. More importantly, listening to how they approach relationships with your design team will also give you a clue about how they will approach communication with you. If you have not already selected an architect or a designer, you want a builder who can lead you to the right partner for your project.



04 Do you have experience building the style and quality of the home that I want?

The kind of home you are building directly affects the builder you will select. If you are building a lake home, you will want a builder who specializes in that construction aspect. This is extremely important, as each style of home presents unique challenges. You want to feel confident that your home builder won't be trying something new and foreign to him on your house but instead will be applying a vast experience of knowledge, wisdom, and lessons learned from past projects and construction jobs.

05 Can you tell me a bit about your estimating process? How do you make sure your budgets are accurate?

You want to be sure the builder's estimating process is extremely thorough since there are multiple layers to good estimating. Listen to make sure the builder's estimating process is extremely thorough. This is a key differentiator between custom and "cookie-cutter" builders. For example, at Homes by Westgate, we perform a room-by-room cost analysis, so you know where the money is going. A good builder needs to know their numbers and market pricing. A good builder will start with a preliminary estimate based on historical hard costs, as well as current market pricing. You want to feel confident in their experience and expertise. At a minimum, their detailed budget estimate (completed after plans and specs are finalized) will largely be based on hard bids from the builder's vendors and subcontractors in the builder's network. Your builder should secure multiple bids from his subcontractors, and insure they are reviewed for accuracy and comprehensiveness. You want to come away knowing that the builder's team strives for no holes in their cost budgets.



06 How long does it take for you to produce an estimate for my home? Will the estimate be free?

A preliminary estimate can take as little as a week or two, and a detailed budget estimate could take as long as four to five weeks. If the builder thinks it will take longer than that, be sure to ask why. There are always reasons, but an excuse is not acceptable. You may have a particularly complex home design that would understandably take longer than a few weeks to analyze, or they may be overloaded. Lack of capacity could be a roadblock and a red flag that your custom home won't get correct and adequate attention if you choose an over-extended builder as your custom home building team.

07 Do you provide free estimates?

People used to think the free estimate was the best way to start their project. We strongly advise against that. That said, a qualified builder should be able to give you an initial “ballpark” number typically based on square footage assumptions. But building a custom house based on a free estimate from a builder will only lead to trouble. Not that many years ago, there was no good way for a builder to track all the details on a project and know what a project would cost upfront. So, they gave an “estimate” based on assumptions, allowances, and guesses. They did the work, collected all the receipts, did the math, and handed in the bill. They didn't know their costs until the end. Some builders still want to work this way. Hire a builder that can perform a preconstruction cost estimate. The biggest advantages are that:

- A) it will give you the actual cost of your project and the ability to modify the design to fit your project's cost.
- B) It allows you to enter and test the working relationship between you and your home builder. If they are making mistakes on paper, chances are they will make them once the shovel goes in the ground.

08 Who will be managing my project, and how often will my project be under direct supervision?

If you're early in the design phase, the builder may not be able to tell you for sure who will be assigned to your project when construction finally begins months from now. Instead, you'll hopefully learn two things from their answer: What each of their project teams looks like (Construction manager only? Construction manager and project manager? Site supervisor driven? What kind of in-office support does each project team get?).

How much are their project teams loaded up at any given time (We're talking complex, high-quality custom homes; your home should be under direct supervision at least every day or every other day).

09 During construction, how will my questions and concerns be addressed?

You should absolutely look for a "good fit" in this aspect of [custom home](#) construction. Hiccups are inevitable in any construction project. You want to make sure that you like the builder's communication style and that you have faith the builder will value your opinions and concerns throughout construction. Bonus points should be awarded if the builder tells you their team will establish a regular meeting schedule with you, your design team, and their subcontractors. This shows that they value organization, accountability, communication, and efficiency.

10 In the event there are changes to the design or unforeseen conditions that result in extra cost, how is it handled? What does that process look like?

For high-end custom homes, it is extremely likely that you will encounter a change order due to the complexity of these projects. When either you or the builder wants to make a change, you want to be assured that they have a system in place for documenting changes, presenting costs and options to you, getting your approval, and efficiently implementing those changes.

11 How long do you anticipate the construction of this project will take? How do you mitigate challenges to stay on schedule during construction?

This answer will vary depending on the size and complexity of your home's design. Depending on that, a custom home can take anywhere from 10 months to over 36 months. What you also want to know is how organized the builder's systems and processes are, that their team has bonafide quality and experience, how dedicated, thorough, and diligent they are about updating your project's schedule regularly, and ensuring they are proactive at forecasting and solving problems before they surface.

12 Do you offer fixed-price or cost-plus contracts?

A competent home builder that you are interviewing will allow you the flexibility to choose the contract type that you feel most comfortable with. They both come with advantages and disadvantages. The contractor should explain both options in detail to you, as well as present the pros and cons of each so that you can feel good about whichever option you choose.

13 Can you give me examples of specific building methods or materials you prefer to use and why?

This question gives insight into two things: how deep their knowledge and expertise runs when it comes to building high-end homes, and also what level of quality represents their minimum standard. Ask follow-up questions to feel comfortable with how patiently and thoroughly they communicate themselves as the best expert for your team.

14 Can you provide me with a sample contract, budget, and warranty?

Unless you notify him/her in advance, they may not have these resources available at the time of your meeting. They should, however, be able to get them to you shortly after. You may also want to ask about the warranty process and how it covers you after you move in. The right answer is that you'll be able to get warranty issues resolved quickly and thoroughly, with minimal intrusions, issues, or headaches for you.

15 Can you provide me with a few references, preferably at least one past client and one current client?

This shouldn't be a problem for a good home builder or contractor. They may have to contact the homeowners to get permission first, but it should be a red flag if they can't do so or hesitate without reasonable cause.



Questions to Ask a Custom Builder (RECAP)

- 01 Are you a licensed homebuilder?
- 02 Are you member of the Home Builders Association of Vancouver?
- 03 How closely do you work with my architect and interior designer, or can you help me find one?
- 04 Do you have experience building the style and quality of the home that I want?
- 05 Can you tell me a bit about your estimating process? How do you make sure your budgets are accurate?
- 06 How long does it take for you to produce an estimate for my home? Will the estimate be free?
- 07 Do you provide free estimates?
- 08 Who will be managing my project, and how often will my project be under direct supervision?
- 09 During construction, how will my questions and concerns be addressed?
- 10 In the event there are changes to the design or unforeseen conditions that result in extra cost, how is it handled? What does that process look like?
- 11 How long do you anticipate the construction of this project will take? How do you mitigate challenges to stay on schedule during construction?
- 12 Do you offer fixed-price or cost-plus contracts?
- 13 Can you give me examples of specific building methods or materials you prefer to use and why?
- 14 Can you provide me with a sample contract, budget, and warranty?
- 15 Can you provide me with a few references, preferably at least one past client and one current client?



WHY WESTGATE?

Now that you have read through this guide on selecting the best builder for your custom home, the obvious question you face is why choose Westgate? We will always be happy to sit with you and discuss any of the dozen questions above, but we believe we bring one additional aspect to the process that most other builders cannot.

And here it is; that “over and above” service and performance you will get by allowing Westgate to build your custom home.

We are in the promise business, and our promise is to build you a custom home that is uniquely yours, on time, and on budget. We don’t believe in “good enough” and will construct your custom home as if it were our own. We take each individual project personally. Our name and reputation are at stake, protected by our team of dedicated and experienced experts, who are never satisfied until you are. We guarantee we will always put you first, seeking to understand your needs and being understood by you. You will be heard, informed, involved, and supported from our first meeting to the day we hand you the keys. We will deliver a home and an experience that will exceed your expectations in every way. That is our promise.

Lets Connect

Homes by Westgate is your luxury custom home builder.