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Managing Change

When we're on the job site, we want to make the most progress possible on our clients' new home. Building is a dynamic and exciting process; one that we try to make trouble free and easy to understand. Once we get going, things can happen quickly, so we work with our clients to make decisions well ahead of time to help ensure they get the home of their dreams.

Before the first scoop of dirt is moved, we collaborate with our home buyers to make most of the big decisions, but that's not the end of the process. Once we're underway, buyers often think of a few things they'd like to change. Such changes may range from a change in bathroom cabinets, different floor coverings, or just adding an extra light switch or two.

We document such requests, called "change orders," to make sure that we and our home buyers have a clear understanding of the scope and cost of the change. Although our goal is to make sure our clients are satisfied with their new home (with no unpleasant surprises when it's time to pay the bill), it's also important for the buyer to understand how change orders affect the building process. When owner and builder communicate well, the impact of change orders on construction schedule and budget can be minimized.

A change order made *after* construction begins always has a cost attached. The cost may be the time (and labor) it takes to make the change or it may be the price of additional materials or products required -- and usually both.

The timing of a change order has a big impact on such costs. Typically, the later in the building process, the more expensive the change order. Some changes, of course, are simply impossible or truly cost prohibitive, such as altering the foundation or moving walls.

We respect our clients' desires to get exactly the house they want. We know that some finishes (or even floor plans) may be hard to visualize until they're actually installed or built. Changes will happen! For that reason, we've become more sophisticated and systematic about managing change orders. Our process not only ensures good communication and provides assurances between everyone involved, but also helps us maintain the building schedule and minimize additional costs.

The change order process: To be effective, the process is designed to create a paper trail and provide reliable cost information up front:

- **Centralization.** Your change order requests are managed by one person, the selections coordinator, to help ensure effective communication between everyone involved. This includes specialty trade contractors, suppliers, our job site managers, and, of course, our customer. We don't have our buyers make special requests directly to a trade contractor, as this is a quick route to misunderstandings and disrupted schedules.
- **Documentation.** Customer requests are transferred to an electronic or paper-based change order form that initiates a paper trail and helps ensure greater accuracy and communication.



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- **Terms.** We anticipate many of the changes our homebuyers make. We have a good idea of the cost and time most changes require. As a result, we can often communicate the terms quickly so that owners can make an informed decision in plenty of time to make the change or decide against it.
- **Confirmation.** It's important to everyone involved that no change occurs without a buyer signature. Buyers must approve the cost and terms, as well as the style, finish, or other details about the change. In addition, buyers must be aware of how the change may affect their move-in date or other aspects of the construction schedule.
- **Inspection.** We may request a buyer visit the new home's job site when the alteration is being made so they can see it happen, ask any questions and insure satisfaction.
- **Payment.** Costs for change orders are billed separately. We ask for full payment up front before making the alteration.

By using a dedicated, document-based change order system, our buyers are assured that any changes they consider are taken care of in a timely fashion without confusion, miscommunication or unnecessary costs. For more details, please refer to your homeowner manual.

Warm regards,

Brian

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President



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