FREE GUIDE FOR OWNER-BUILDERS

The Building Sequence

This is a basic timeline to help you keep your build in the right order. Every project is different. Your lot, foundation type, selections, the weather and your subs' schedules can all change the order and the timing. This sequence is typical for Middle Tennessee.

Before You Build

Take care that the house plan you choose is right for the lot you choose. Some plans may not be well suited to some lots.

Phase 1: Site and Building Selection

1. Choose your lot.
2. Get your septic permit, or have a soil scientist mark the septic site. On city sewer, have the sewer tap located.
3. Check the mandatory building setbacks.
4. Choose the house location with the setbacks, septic, driveway, utilities and drainage in mind.
5. Choose or buy house plans that fit the lot and the house location. A full set of plans should include a materials list for the lumber, doors, windows, roofing and so on. If yours don't, most lumber yards will do a materials takeoff as part of their quote (some may charge for this if you don't buy the materials from them).

Phase 2: Planning

1. Work out the details that plans frequently leave out:
   - Where the utilities enter the house
   - HVAC unit locations and duct routes
   - Plumbing walls
   - Vent routes
   - Insulation
   - Electrical service size
2. Build your budget and agree on payment terms with your subs. Tell each sub up front that a lien waiver will be required with each payment.
3. Line up financing, if needed.
4. Get your building permit and builder's risk insurance.
5. Order long-lead items like windows and trusses.

Construction

Phase 3: Site Work and Foundation (3–6 weeks)

1. Set up temporary power, a portable toilet, silt fence and a construction entrance.
2. Stake the house.
3. Dig the footings.
4. Footing inspection.
5. Pour the footings.
6. Build the foundation walls.
7. Waterproofing, foundation drains and termite treatment.
8. If it's a slab: underslab plumbing, inspection, then pour the slab.

Phase 4: Framing and Dry-In (4–8 weeks)

1. Frame the floor system (if not a slab).
2. Frame and sheathe the walls.
3. Set the roof trusses or rafters, then sheathe the roof.
4. Roofing.
5. House wrap.
6. Install the windows and exterior doors.

Phase 5: Rough-Ins (3–5 weeks)

1. Plumbing rough-in and pressure test (completed in Phase 3 for a home with a slab floor).
2. HVAC ductwork and vents.
3. Electrical rough-in and panel.
4. Low-voltage wiring (data, TV, security).
5. Rough-in and framing inspections.

Phase 6: Insulation and Drywall (3–5 weeks)

1. Air sealing.
2. Insulation, with an inspection if required.
3. Hang the drywall.
4. Finish the drywall.
5. Prime.

Phase 7: Finishes (6–12 weeks)

Interior work (the order can vary with the flooring type):

1. Wall and ceiling paint.
2. Cabinets.
3. Countertops.
4. Tile.
5. Flooring.
6. Trim.
7. Trim paint and touch-up.
8. Fixtures.

Exterior work happens at the same time as the interior work:

1. Brick or siding.
2. Exterior trim.
3. Gutters and downspouts.
4. Exterior paint.

To finish up:

1. Plumbing, electrical and HVAC trim-out.
2. Appliances.
3. Driveway and walks.
4. Final grading.

Phase 8: Final and Close-Out (2–4 weeks)

1. Final inspections.
2. Certificate of Occupancy.
3. Punch list.
4. Lien waivers and final payments.
5. Warranties collected and registered.
6. Move in.