



6 MISTAKES BUILDING YOUR NEW HOUSE

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This online download article is from HEARTHSTONE construction, the leader in Custom Mountain Home Construction in the western North Carolina region. This article will help you understand just a few of the mistakes that can be made if you don't have Hearthstone Construction build your new house. You are welcome to printout and share this article with others. And please Do send others our website link for this article. Many mistakes ARE made by Contractors, every day who are not familiar with building in mountainous regions. We have highlighted only a few.

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1. FOOTINGS TOO HIGH

When some builders have their foundation excavators dig the footing trenches for a house, they often have to stair-step the trenches, which is common.



However, some excavators, not being Licensed General Contractors, unfortunately make the vertical leg of such step-downs too close to the surface of the ground. This can result in frost heave during harsh mountain winters, cracking the foundation, fracturing the foundation wall, as well as transferring other movement problems throughout that portion of your structure, including breaking

plumbing, drywall, and window glass and making doors bind. Hearthstone watches this process to guard against such future problems in your house.

2. LAND TOO STEEP

Along with the expert advice from our consulting Licensed Architect: [HOME ARCHITECTS®](#), Hearthstone warns its clients about steep land. Many buyers of land in the western North Carolina area often make the terrible financial mistake of buying steep ground on which to build their future house. What they don't understand is that doing so greatly complicates the foundations. The foundations need more advanced Structural Engineering, the thickness of the foundation walls and their required steel reinforcing and need for buttresses, increasing foundation wall cost greatly. Also, there is more material involved. Concrete in the western NC region is expensive and made even more costly by the need to typically have it pumped. And imagine how much energy it would take you to walk up and down your property. Just walking. Now grab a concrete block and load a 12' long 2x12 over your other shoulder and walk it again. Just once. Is your heart beating hard? Are you sweating? Do you feel faint? Now imagine doing that, like the Builders of your home are going to have to do, for 10 hours a day, for about 6 months to 20 months. That's another reason that steep land makes construction more costly: it's hard work. And no one's going to do all that work for a discounted price. Rather, it's going to come at a premium. It's quite common for steep land foundations for a medium-sized home to be into 6 figures, well before you even get to the main floor of the house. Do yourself a big favor: engage Hearthstone and their consulting Architect for a modest fee, to walk your proposed land before you buy it to save yourself the financial heartbreak of all of those people who did not do this. We can help you find gentler land, and perhaps still have a great view. We have strong relationships with the best [Real Estate Brokers](#) in the area.

3. COST PLUS RATHER THAN FIXED PRICE

There appears to be some sort of unwritten agreement among many of the Contractors in the WNC region to only offer Cost Plus arrangements. This is where the Contractor insists on you signing their contract WITHOUT KNOWING WHAT THE PRICE IS GOING TO BE to build your house. Unbelievably, thousands of people have done that. We're not what we would consider rich people. And we cannot understand why even well-to-do people would ever sign such an agreement. We typically offer FIXED PRICE agreements to most of our clients (which can vary, depending on circumstances). That means: if everything stays known and the same, you know what your project's going to cost to build from Day 1. Obviously, if things change, that affects the price. We have to believe you're going to feel better about knowing the price before you start building. That typically means you're going to need detailed professionally prepared architectural design documents with lots of detail, so we understand what we're getting into. And that works for us. That's the reason most of the Cost Plus Contractors give for Not

offering you a Fixed Price (“too many unknowns”). For instance, our consulting Architect typically has 38 sheets of drawings and specifications (24”x36”) for their projects. That allows us to properly price everything out so we know what we’re getting into. And that gives you peace of mind. Of course, you are responsible to contract with a qualified licensed Architect (like HOME ARCHITECTS®) to obtain proper documents. Skimpy documents = too many unknowns = Cost Plus agreement. Detailed documents = pricing obtained = Fixed Price agreement.

4. MEDIOCRE ROOFING UNDERLAYMENT

Just about everywhere in the USA and in the building code, Contractors are still using good old #15 pound asphaltic felt for roofing underlayment. Those Contractors who *think* they are doing it “better” may be using 30# felt. But the reality is: WNC can have fierce winds and harsh winters. This is an Alpine Rainforest ecology. That means we get 100 to 200 inches of precipitation in rain, ice, snow just about every year. And have you ever seen what happens to asphaltic felt on roofs during wind? It tears. A lot. And if you’ve ever watched what most builders then do: they simply nail the shredded pieces right back down, like pieces of confetti. That’s hardly a reliable roofing underlayment.

When our clients will allow us to spend just a little bit more, we use WURM (as specified by Architects like HOME ARCHITECTS®): Waterproof Underlayment Roofing Membrane. This is also called “Peel & Stick” membrane and is often 40 mils thick and comes in wide rolls that are secured to the roofing sheathing not only with nails, but more importantly: adhesive that is integral and continuous over the downward surface, and that is proof rolled to adhere it to the sheathing. The bond is typically so tenacious that it will Not let go. And future attempts to remove it will tear the roof sheathing apart. Now that’s a waterproof bond. And cheap insurance so that when (not “if”) your exposed roofing shingles, metal or whatever you have for your visible roofing allows some moisture through here and there, the underlayment keeps it out of your structure and your house. Another Hearthstone quality item that you’re not likely to get with other Builders, unless you directly demand it.

5. CHEAP SUBFLOOR SHEATHING (and cheap roofing sheathing)

Hearthstone uses a premium t&g (tongue & groove) subfloor structural sheathing that has built-in resin, making it highly resistive to rain water during construction. It remains flat. Hearthstone also glues and screws this high performance subflooring to your floor joists. GLUED & SCREWED is our motto in this regard. Not many other Builders do this as a matter of course. As long as your Architect and Structural Engineer have properly



sized your floor joists, it is unlikely that you will ever hear or feel floor squeaks or nail pops. Your subfloor sheathing becomes bonded to your floor joists, turning them into a sort of double tee, system like precast concrete systems. In other words, your floor sheathing works together with your floor joists to form a stiffer floor that hardly has any detectable bounce in it when you walk across it.

Building Code does NOT require this. It's simply a smarter, better way to build.

Note: if your Builder does Not use a premium underlayment with exterior grade resins and glues, your floor sheathing will very likely cup and warp, due to all the rain WNC experiences. The rain does not stop while Contractors are building your house. It can rain and rain and rain. Inches in a single day. There can be standing water on the floor sheathing, so much so that Builders have to drill holes in the sheathing just to drain all the water. That's normal. But you better have really good floor sheathing, or it's going to warp, bow and cup, making it very difficult to obtain a nice, flat, stiff floor.

And of course, the same applies to your roofing sheathing. Hearthstone uses premium grade t&g roof sheathing that is several steps above what other Contractors are ALLOWED to use per Building Code. Did you really believe that Building Code protects you and guarantees you a first class house? No, it does not. Code is a gathering of MINIMUMS, not any sort of guarantee of quality.

6. LACK OF TERMITE FLASHING)

You're going to have a hard time believing this next point. Building Code requires termite flashing. However, MOST BUILDERS DO NOT USE IT OR INSTALL IT, and most County building inspectors don't catch this. Once again: do you really think Code protects you? No, it does Not.



Hearthstone uses a painted flashing that helps protect your house against invading termites and other bugs. We want you to have a clean, healthy

and safe home. We work with talented, creative and meticulous Licensed Architects to help this happen for you, such as HOME ARCHITECTS®, who detail such things as termite flashing on their documents so that our subcontractors understand what to do. And we watch them closely to make sure it gets installed properly.

Like bugs? Use another Builder. Want a clean, dry, nice house? Call Hearthstone.

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Because: there are hundreds of things, just like the 6 above that are just as important during the construction of your house. Hire the pros: contact Hearthstone now.