

Building a *Dream*

A custom built home expresses the personality and lifestyle of its owners. It embraces the spirit of those who live within it.



Amy Mizner, Marc Kaplan, Sheryl Simon

Photographer: Drew Hyman

Marc Kaplan, of Sanford Custom Builders has over twenty-five years of experience building custom homes in the MetroWest area. Amy Mizner and Sheryl Simon of the MiznerSimon Team at Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage have been helping buyers find their dream home in the Weston and Wellesley areas for over fifteen years. Together, they answer the most commonly asked questions about building a custom home.

Building a custom home is a complex process, where do I begin?

Sheryl: It is important to start with an experienced real estate buyer's agent who understands land development, the building process, and market value. Your agent will be a valuable resource for hiring the right builder and architect.

How do I select a builder and an architect?

Amy: While working with your buyer's agent to find the right property, you can simultaneously begin interviewing builders and architects. When a potential piece of land or a tear down opportunity is identified, it is advantageous to have your builder and architect on board to assist you in evaluating the site.

Marc: During the interview process the architect will present other homes they have designed. The builder will walk you through homes they have built. Both will provide you with client references. The synergy between the builder and architect is key; a good builder understands and respects the role of the architect. It is helpful if they have worked on projects similar to yours.

Amy: The most impressive homes I've seen are those where the buyer, builder, architect and interior designer work together as a cohesive team.

What is the process for obtaining town approvals?

Amy: Before purchasing, it is imperative that the buyer be clear about their expectations and

requirements. These prerequisites should then be reviewed within the context of what the town allows. For example, if you want a pool your team needs to know that up front to ensure that it will fit into the building envelope.

Marc: The approval process varies from town to town but you should always work with a team of seasoned professionals experienced in navigating the process.

How can I visualize the end result?

Sheryl: The job of a great buyer's agent is to educate you. Visit finished projects that are recommended by your team. Look at newly constructed homes on the market to evaluate finishes, trends and styles of homes so that you can more effectively communicate your preferences.

Marc: The architect and landscape architect will prepare visuals that will assist you in understanding your project. At a minimum this is a set of building plans, but may also include perspective drawings, models, computer generated renderings and virtual tours of your proposed house and property.

What are the advantages of building custom versus renovating an existing home?

Marc: Every property is different and needs to be carefully analyzed to determine how best to give you the home you want. Custom building allows you to design a house exactly the way you would like it unencumbered by preexisting conditions that can limit design. However, if a property has interesting or unique details that are expensive to duplicate, then renovating may be the way to go.

Realistically, how do I stay within my budget?

Marc: The most important component for staying within your budget is open and honest communication with your builder. It is the builder's responsibility



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to prepare a detailed budget prior to construction commencing. In general, increases or decreases to the budget occur when there are changes to the project scope. When construction is underway, monthly budget and schedule meetings keep the owner up to date. It should be noted that some modifications, especially if requested early on in the process, do not add additional cost to the project.

Amy: I always tell my clients to work backwards from your budget and stick to it. Put a small slush fund away for unexpected expenditures. You will then be able to control the overages. My former career in TV production taught me that you must start with a great concept, hire a great team and you will get great results.

behind our work for as long as our clients are living in their homes.

How important is my input?

Amy: I would be very concerned if the builder you hire is resistant to hearing your input. Their job is to bring their expertise to the process in order to execute your vision. They should be good listeners, good problem solvers and good performers.

Sheryl: Once again, the most critical job for the owner is to assemble a team experienced in your project type – a team that can communicate and work well together.

Marc: Your input is critical. The most successful homes I've been involved with are the ones where the owner is fully engaged. Weekly job site meetings with the owner, builder and architect are crucial to keeping the project on track and ensuring that the owner is getting their dream home.

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Explain what a typical builder warranty does and does not cover, and the length of time it is valid.

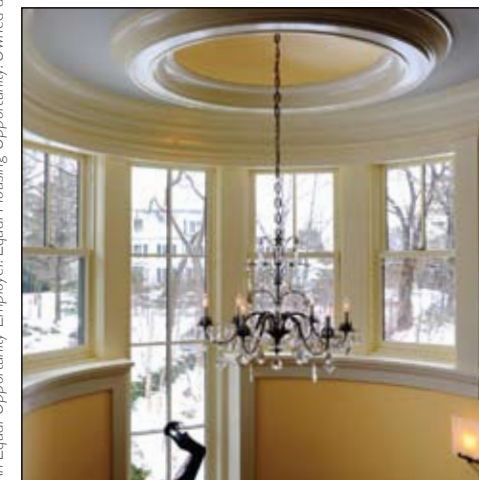
Marc: A builder's warranty should cover any problems that may occur in your home, other than normal wear and tear or situations that may arise that are completely out of the builder's control. The warranty period should be for a minimum of 18 months. At Sanford Custom Builders, we stand



Jan Gleysteen Architects, Inc. Photographer: Richard Mandelkorn



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