

Ask Jon Eakes

Why I refuse to consider cost per square foot estimates.

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" I would like to know the average cost per square foot for building a single two story home with hardwood. Turn Key without landscaping. Stone and stucco exterior In the Gatineau region?" Kevin
I am sorry Kevin, but I never believed in an "average cost per square foot" for much of anything -- it is totally misleading. First each region has cost variations in both land and house values that have very little to do with construction costs. Second, there can be such a wide range of "quality" choices in construction that two buildings with the same square footage which appear at the moment of purchase to be similar can vary by over 100% -- one will meet minimum building code, the other could be more energy efficient, one built with more durable materials, have a range of decoration quality (even hardwood flooring prices vary by 100% as can the sub-flooring under the hardwood), have a good warranty or a minimum warranty and then of course there is simply the question of quality of construction. Alongside this there is the question of long term costs, more capital output at the beginning with less maintenance and operating costs, or the other way around. If we were to really give out a price per square foot, it should probably be a price per square foot per year, which would include the maintenance costs, replacement costs and energy efficiency of materials and appliances. One inexpensive house could cost far more to operate than an initially more expensive house and when done right, the second could actually cost less over time than the cheap one. I am sorry but price per square foot can be extremely misleading both in renovation and new construction. In fact when you ask for prices from builders you really should supply a complete specifications list which indicate your choice of quality relating to everything from sub-structure to structure to finishes. Those builders who do give price per square foot estimates actually do have that specification book, they are just not showing it to you. Ask for it and see if their price provides the quality, durability and energy efficiency you are seeking. Jon

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