

— FOR FAMILIES BUILDING IN NORTH GEORGIA

Why Are Builders' Estimates So *Different?*

A plain-spoken look at the six factors that make one builder's number look nothing like another's — and how to read an estimate with confidence.

01

Takeoffs, materials & labor — what's really being measured.

02

Specifications & allowances — the budget you can actually live with.

03

The builder's fee — what overhead and profit pay for.

I.

THE METHOD

STEP ONE

What is a *Takeoff*?

A takeoff is the measuring and counting of every material and labor item needed to build a house, based on what's in the plans. We do a complete takeoff using construction estimating software to measure and count all walls, doors, windows, drywall, insulation, trim, tile, and more — whether it's a sketch on a napkin or a full set of plans.

If this process is skipped, the estimate will not be accurate — and it will almost always come in low.

II.

COST OF MATERIALS

APPLES TO APPLES

Cost of *Materials*

Most builders in this area buy from the same local suppliers. So when one builder's material costs come in lower than another's, it's almost always for one of these reasons:

- 01 The builder has under-estimated the material or missed something in the takeoff.
- 02 They're using a lower grade of material than what should be used.
- 03 They aren't accounting for the waste that accumulates from that material.
- 04 They're keeping numbers low to win the job.

THE PRECISION STANDARD

All of the materials in our estimates are priced at the quality we recommend in a custom home — never the cheapest line on the shelf.

III.

COST OF LABOR

TRADE BY TRADE

Cost of *Labor*

Labor costs vary far more than materials. One subcontractor can be twice as expensive as another in the exact same trade — and much of that difference is about quality. If another builder's labor costs are lower than ours, it's likely one of these:

- 01 They're using inexperienced subs with low rates — and lower quality.
- 02 Their subs use cheaper materials or cut corners to save time.
- 03 They aren't accounting for the "extras" subs typically charge for the design of the house.
- 04 Again — keeping numbers low to win the job.

THE PRECISION STANDARD

All of our subcontractors are true craftsmen who primarily work on custom homes — not spec homes.

IV.

SPECIFICATIONS

WHAT'S INCLUDED *Specifications*

Do the house plans come with detailed specifications for the builder to price? If not, the builder will often gravitate to the cheapest specs to keep his number low. When choosing a builder, make sure they have a process for specifying every material in the house — so you know exactly what's included.

THE PRECISION STANDARD

Our estimates include our recommended construction standards and custom-home specifications — about 12 pages of specs that can be modified to fit your build.

V.

ALLOWANCES

SELECTIONS & BUDGETS

Allowances

What are the allowance amounts the builder is giving you — and are they higher or lower than what you'll actually spend? We recommend you pick out all of your allowances before we start building, so your estimate is more accurate and so you have a real sense of whether you'll stay in budget.

THE PRECISION STANDARD

Our allowance budgets start at a level that gets you good-quality custom-home materials. Because selections vary so much by taste, we have you meet our trusted vendors to quote your selections before you sign the contract — fewer surprises during the build.

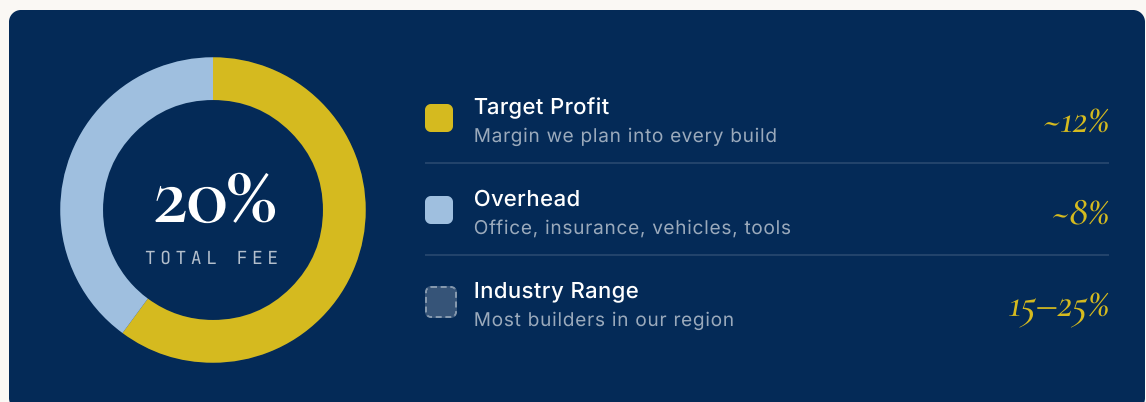
VI.

BUILDER'S FEE

OVERHEAD & PROFIT

Builder's Fee

Every builder has a fee that covers overhead and profit. Overhead is the cost of running the business — office, fuel, vehicles, maintenance, rent, insurance, phones, tools, and more. **Most builders charge between 15% and 25%.**



We also fix our fee so it does not increase even if costs of the project rise during the build.

— OUR COMMITMENT TO YOU

No estimate is perfect — but ours is built to be *honest.*

This is one of the biggest investments you'll ever make. Sit down with us and we'll walk through every line of your estimate, answer every question, and make sure you know exactly what you're getting in your custom home.

01

Send Us Your Plans

A full set of drawings — or a sketch on a napkin. Whatever you have, we can work with it.

02

Ballpark Estimate

We return a transparent budget, typically within $\pm 5\%$ of the final number — free of charge.

03

Sit Down With Us

We walk you through every line, every spec, and every allowance — together at the table.

READY TO BEGIN

Send us a plan — or sketch something on a napkin — and we'll give you a ballpark estimate, typically within $\pm 5\%$.

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