

## What is a Square Foot?

How often do we hear, "How much per square foot does it cost to build?" We use a factored square foot method to try and answer that question in the design phase. This method is not precise but it's an excellent predictor of project cost.

Since all homes are unique, it's nearly impossible to describe a home by the finished square footage, as there are so many factors to take into consideration; such as unfinished space, vaulted space, covered porches, etc. The "Factored Square Foot" method has evolved to answer the question. This technique is a tool we use in doing preliminary design for our clients to meet their budget. This measurement is just a tool, not a promise.

The technique establishes a method that helps compare the different components of the building. Using a system of fractional multipliers, we can more accurately describe a project's actual square footage, calling it "Factored Square Footage."

### **The Multipliers:**

Gross heated sqft measured from the outside walls	1.00
Vaulted, cathedral, 2 story space	0.50
10' and taller flat ceilings (9' is standard)	0.15
Unfinished walk-out basement	0.20
Garage, attached or detached	0.50
Garage in basement	0.30
Unfinished attic with stairs and plywood floor	0.20
Covered porches or open roof deck over finished areas	0.40
Open wood decks or hard surface terraces or patios	0.25

### **Cost Per Square Foot:**

In this area, we have found that a quality custom home starts at about \$180 per factored square foot, the average is just over \$200 per factored square foot, and the higher end is \$250+ per factored square foot. These costs per factored square foot estimates were derived by using the multipliers to establish the factored square feet of actual projects recently completed. Every project has both site development and utility costs, which are NOT included in the factored square footage, as they can vary so tremendously from project to project.

### **What to Expect:**

The different values in \$ per factored square feet can be attributed to features and specifications, as well as design complexity. All the houses, however, will be well designed, beautifully sited and energy efficient, with the high quality craftsmanship Smith & Robertson offers.

Our lower \$ per factored square foot assumes a high quality energy efficient home with high quality windows such as Andersen; cedar clapboard or Hardiplank; high definition architectural roof shingles; hardwood flooring in main living areas; carpet in bedrooms; ceramic in master bath; solid wood cabinets with custom laminate or tile countertops; two-piece baseboard, chair rail and crown molding in formal rooms; 13 SEER multi-zone heat pumps. Timberframing in some rooms, possibly.

Our higher \$ per factored square foot expects superior quality windows such as Loewen; cedar shingle, brick or stone siding; cedar shake or metal roofing; antique wood flooring; masonry fireplace with natural stone veneer; custom kitchen cabinets with Corian, granite or soapstone countertops; wainscot paneling, Geo-thermal heating system. More expansive Timberframing.

### **Trade-Offs:**

These features are just a sampling to give an idea of what to expect in a given price range. In reality, a custom home is a series of trade-offs that maintain the budget. By prioritizing the features that are really important, and knowing how much they cost, an owner can pick and choose the features within their budget that will make their dream house a reality.