

GUIDE 04 OF 6 | WE BUILD NH

THE BUILD TIMELINE

What a Custom Home Build Actually Looks Like

A realistic timeline - not the optimistic one, the honest one.

I have built homes that came in ahead of schedule and homes that ran long. The projects that stay on track share one thing: an owner who understood the timeline before the first shovel went in the ground.

The other thing that kills timelines is mid-build value engineering. A budget conversation that turns into material substitutions, which turns into waiting for approvals, which turns into schedule slippage. The way to prevent that is to make every material decision before construction begins, lock them into the contract, and hold the line. Here is what a well-planned build actually looks like.

MONTHS 1-2: PRE-CONSTRUCTION PLANNING

- * Initial conversations, site assessment, and feasibility.
- * Architectural design or plan review begins.
- * Survey and soil testing completed.
- * Preliminary budget established -- including soft costs and 15% contingency.
- * Contractor selected and contract signed with all materials fully specified.
- * State-level permits filed immediately -- septic, shoreland, wetlands first.

MONTHS 2-4: DESIGN DEVELOPMENT & PERMITS

- * Architectural drawings finalized.
- * Engineering completed -- structural, HVAC, electrical.
 - * All material selections finalized and locked: flooring, cabinetry, countertops, windows, doors, roofing, siding, fixtures. Do not leave these for later.
- * Municipal building permit submitted.
- * Windows and doors ordered immediately -- NH lead times run 8-14 weeks.
- * Manufacturer warranty documents collected for all specified materials.
- * No-substitution policy confirmed in writing with contractor.

MONTHS 3-5: SITE PREPARATION & FOUNDATION

- * Site clearing, excavation, and grading.
- * Ledge: GPR scan should have identified this. Budget for blasting -- it is common in the White Mountains.
 - * Foundation formed, poured, waterproofed, and drained. Specified waterproofing system installed no substitutions.
- * Foundation inspection passed before backfill.
- * Verify that foundation waterproofing warranty is registered with manufacturer.

- * Backfill, rough grading, temporary utilities.

MONTHS 5-7: FRAMING & ROUGH-INS

- * Framing using specified lumber grades and fastener schedules per engineering.
- * Roof sheathing, ice and water shield, and roofing installed per specified system. NH requires full ice and water shield -- do not accept a substitution here.
- * Specified windows and doors installed.
- * Rough plumbing, electrical, and HVAC per design.
- * Inspections after each rough-in trade. Nothing proceeds without passing.
- * Blower door test before insulation. Fix deficiencies before closing walls.
- * Specified insulation system installed. Verify R-values match contract.

MONTHS 7-9: INSULATION & MECHANICALS

- * Drywall -- specified type and thickness. Fire-rated assemblies where required.
- * Finish trim: specified species and profile. Substitutions in trim are visible for the life of the home.
- * Finish plumbing, electrical, and HVAC with specified equipment.
- * Tile and flooring installation with specified materials.
- * Cabinet installation -- specified manufacturer and line.
- * Register all equipment warranties: HVAC, appliances, mechanical systems.

MONTHS 9-11: FINISH WORK & PUNCH LIST

- * Specified countertops templated and installed.
- * Appliances installed and warranties registered.
- * Finish paint with specified products not a budget category to cut.
- * Hardware and fixtures per specification.
- * Final mechanical inspections.
- * Punch list: thorough review of every detail. Every deficiency corrected before final payment.

MONTHS 11-12: CLOSEOUT & HANDOVER

- * Final walkthrough with owner.
- * All warranty documents collected, organized, and transferred to owner.
- * Permit certificates and Certificate of Occupancy in hand.
- * As-built drawings provided.
- * Landscaping and final grading.
- * You move in. Knowing every material in your home has a warranty and a name.

OWNER'S TIMELINE CHECKLIST

- All materials specified by name in contract before signing

- No-substitution clause in contract
- State-level permits filed (months 1-2)
- Windows and doors ordered before permit approval (months 2-3)
- All selections finalized before framing (months 3-4)
- Foundation waterproofing warranty registered
- Foundation inspection passed before backfill
- House dried in before NH fall weather
- Blower door test completed before insulation
- Rough-in inspections passed before insulation
- All equipment warranties registered at installation
- Punch list complete and signed before final payment
- Certificate of Occupancy in hand before move-in
- All warranty documents transferred to owner at handover