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DESIGN WITH DETAIL

ELEGANT DEVELOPMENT LEADS THE WAY FOR INNOVATIVE
CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS THROUGHOUT THE LOWER MAINLAND

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The driving force behind Clay Construction Inc., a builder of custom homes, is passion for the trade that goes into every home that is built. Not only are their houses of the highest quality, but each contain the personal touch needed to satisfy the buyer. Clay Construction works closely with their clients throughout the construction process, working with transparency to provide the best customer service and lasting satisfaction. They are constantly working at improving their building methods and strengthening communication with home buyers. Every aspect of construction is looked after to maintain the highest standards, and please not only the client, but the team at Clay Construction themselves. Their homes boast quality finishing, striking architecture, superior workmanship, and the best materials.

Clay Construction carefully goes over budget details throughout the project, and provides excellent after sales services. "I think we're extremely strong – I don't know of any other builder that puts the same level of effort we put into a project even before we get the job in terms of putting together an estimate with information on the home, and the thoroughness of our budget," says Larry Clay, Owner and President of Clay Construction. Larry started his career as a high school teacher, building houses part-time, but his love of the craft made him decide to take the leap and enter home building full-time. In 2004, he and his wife Candice started

the company, primarily building spec homes. From the beginning it was imperative that they would try to put more effort and quality into their work than any of their competition.

Larry has confidence that his experience as a teacher gave him the communication and people skills that could set him apart from other builders. In the years since, Clay Construction has come to be seen by customers as a company place their trust in – a company that works on schedule, on-budget, and that guides clients through each step of the building process to make sure people know what they are getting.

Clay Construction has tried to limit the number of projects they take on at any given time. They want to give each of their homes their total attention and worry they will not be able to meet their own standards if they took on more. "Five homes is the limit to what we will take on at a given time," says Larry. "Depending on their size and location, I have to be at the site each day. Then I communicate the progress via emails and pictures to my clients, and answer any questions that come up."

Larry says many of the clients they get are people who have had bad experiences with builders in the past who have cut corners and only met the bare minimum of the building code. They go to Clay Construction willing to pay more to get a worthwhile product. While they deal mainly with higher end homes, they also take on projects with clients on a smaller budget, but still delivering the same level of quality and attention to detail.



TRAIL BLAZING







Larry Clay, *President*

"They're fine with installing vinyl siding or laminate countertops, and it doesn't have to be hardwood on the floors. They'll spend less money on their homes, but they just want to know their home is built properly and will hold up for years."

The primary source of work for Clay Construction comes from positive word of mouth and referrals. "My clients are often referred by friends, and they only refer me. They see the level of quality in the work that we do, and they know that their friends are happy, so I'm the only one they recommend," says Larry. Occasionally they will get clients who discovered Clay Construction through other ways, such as through the Better Business Bureau or the Greater Vancouver Home Builders Association webpage. Even in these cases though, it's their past work that usually ends up getting them the deals. "They want to talk to past clients, and then they're won over when they see the homes and they talk to the previous customers we've had."

What helps set Clay Construction apart is the many little things they do, and the extra steps they take to really deliver the best to their clients. For example, just before they start insulation in any of their homes and everything is laid out, Larry will take literally thousands of pictures of the house. Going room to room, he will take about 100 pictures of each room from all possible angles, and then download the pictures onto a DVD to give to the client. At any point in the future, they will be able to trace every wire, point loads and beam in the house. This will greatly simplify matters if any issue ever comes up behind the walls.

Transparency is very important for them. "Every invoice is digitized, and the client can see every invoice that comes from the sub-trades or suppliers. They log in from my website, and they can access every invoice, and know financially exactly where they're at," says Larry. As well, they try to educate their clients and let them know the positives

and negatives of their choices so they can make informed decisions they won't regret. They let their clients know about the many energy efficiency options they have available to them, such as exterior rigid installation, spray foam, LED lights, heat pumps and radiant floors. However, they also follow the clients' wishes. "There's so much we can do, but we try to educate them and let them decide what they want. It's up to the client."

Clay Construction is BUILT GREEN® certified and a member of Climate Smart. Sustainable building practices are very important for them, and they take on many different initiatives. For example, Clay Construction aims to be a paperless operation. While they do have a fax machine, it has been unplugged, and all sub-trades and suppliers are encouraged to email rather than fax them. As well, Larry hopes to eventually buy a hybrid truck, as his job requires a lot of driving. However, Larry says it is hard to adopt one standard of efficiency for all his homes, as he can only install what his clients are willing to pay for. "What I try to do is encourage them to go in a certain direction. But it is harder to sell in BC because of our mild climate," he says.

Clay Construction has been recognized by their industry for the quality of their homes. In 2010, they were double finalists at the Georgie® Awards for Best Single Family Detached Home, 3,000 Sq. Ft. and Over. As much as they appreciate award nominations as something that distinguishes them from competition and attracts business, they always build firstly to satisfy their clients.

The future for Clay Construction looks very positive, says Larry. "I'm really excited about some of the moves we're making in our company." One initiative in particular that he is excited about is an initiative that would help provide more thorough information to their clients. Although the estimates Clay Construction provides are already very detailed, they are now putting together binders to present to clients, that goes through all the features of the home and their cost.

The customer will know exactly how all the money they paid was spent in the house, with information explaining everything from the price of the fireplace to the type of flooring used. "There's a real sense of peace for the client. They know that not only am I telling them what price it's going to cost, I'm also informing them what they will receive for that amount."

What Clay Construction wants most to achieve is to continue offering the best to their customers. Larry hopes that every customer is led carefully through the building process, and at the end truly pleased with the results. He wants to make sure every client can say that the contracts were solid, that everything went according to plan, and that if any surprises did come up that they were informed and everything handled properly. "I spell out in advance how we handle different things associated with the build so there are no surprises. We discuss these things even before signing any contracts. At the end of the day, if the customer is satisfied, I'm a happy man," says Larry.

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