



Chicago Tribune HOMES MARKETPLACE

SPECIAL ADVERTISING SECTION



The Jacobs Companies, LLC have built over 4,000 homes in the North Shore. They have been building luxury and custom homes since 1935 so their reputation is solid.



How to determine a builder's history and reputation

If you're looking to purchase new construction, you should shop for your builder as diligently as you shop for a home, advises the Northern Illinois Home Builders Association. Whether you're buying a condo, a townhouse, a house in a subdivision, or a custom built house, you want to know that you are buying a good quality home from a reputable builder. The organization offers a handy checklist for choosing a builder at www.nihba.com.

Tony Crasi, a builder in Ohio and a member of the National Association of Home Builders, says finding the right builder is all about "experience, references and good chemistry. Chemistry, or compatible personalities, is important because you're going to spend a lot of time with this person and if you don't get that warm and fuzzy feeling from the beginning it's best to move on."

So, just how do you determine a builder's history and reputation? Simply put: ask and look around.

The Jacobs Companies, LLC is a local developer with deep roots in the North Shore — literally. It has been building luxury communities and custom homes since 1935.

Candi Hartwig, Vice President of Sales for the developer, offers several suggestions for home shoppers.

"They can ask the builder for referrals, they can visit the building department in

the community they are considering for their home and they can drive through neighborhoods where their prospective builder has built," she says. "For example, The Jacobs Companies has built over 4,000 homes in the North Shore. In each of our brochure packages we include a list of the communities we have developed. If I was considering a builder, I would be driving through communities developed by my potential builder."

Jacobs' newest community is Poets Corner in Vernon Hills, which will include 12 townhomes and four duplexes. The grand opening was in March and the community is already a quarter sold. First deliveries will be in the fall of 2014.

Searching

A good place to start your search may be a simple call to a local homebuilders association.

"While they won't necessarily recommend one builder over another, they can give you a list of qualified builders who have built homes in your budget range or that have experience in building the particular type of home you're interested in," says Crasi.

You can also ask your friends, relatives, and local building officials or perhaps land developers for recommendations.

"Ask about what kind of experience they've had with specific builders, do they



Working with a reputable builder will allow you to get the quality home of your dreams like this Jacobs Companies built home in Highland Park.

build a quality home, can they stay within the budget, how do they respond when there are customer service related issues, etc.," Crasi says.

Once you've narrowed down your list you can set up interviews and make your selection. During that interview process it's important to visit homes that builder has built and talk to their past customers. "Most

times that will be what helps you make your decision," says Crasi.

This part of the process is what has helped Jacobs maintain its longevity and good reputation. "A referral is the very best advertising any business can ever receive," says Hartwig. "We are proud of the fact that we have built for several generations in one family or that friends refer their friends. A number of our homeowners are kind enough to let our clients (who are considering purchasing) walk through their homes to see an end product. If this doesn't say, 'I refer Jacobs, I don't know what does.'"

Asking

Hartwig recommends prospective buyers ask potential builders the following questions:

- How long have you been in business?
- How many homes have you built?
- Describe your organization? Who are your key players?
- What do you do different than XYZ Builders down the street?
- Do you allow time for our attorney to review your contract?
- Describe your design process. Do I have to visit different venues to make my selections or do you have an on-site design studio?
- Explain your warranty program.