

▼Part 3 in a series

Building your own home

▼Here's the plan...

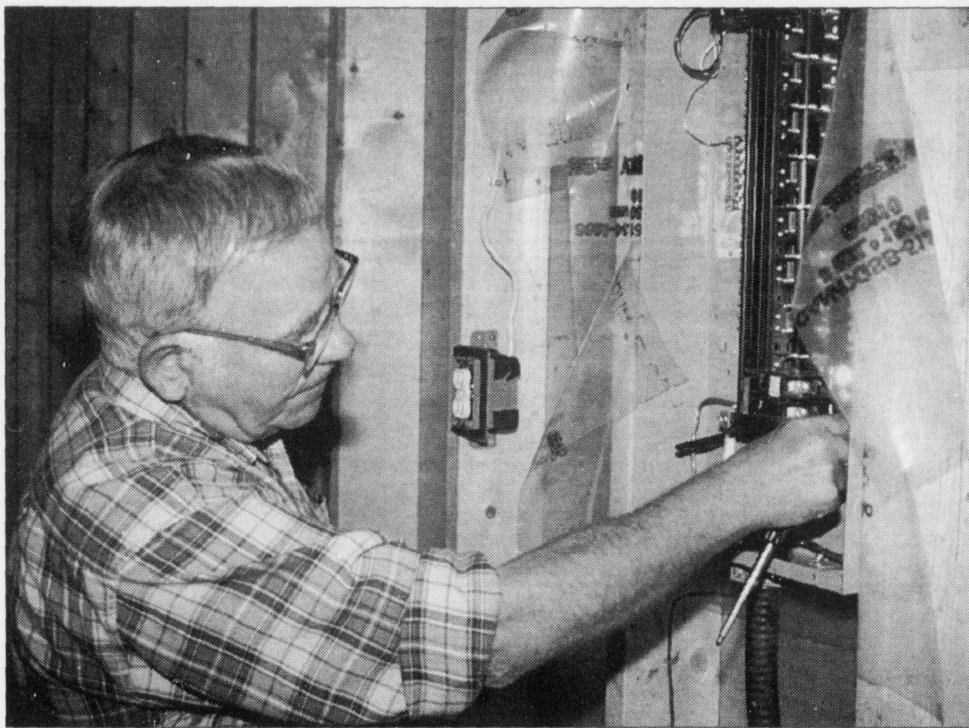
There's a small revolution going on in the house-building industry, and it's being fueled primarily by your average man and woman, who are taking pencil in hand, and designing their own homes. That's just fine, and those are all the plans you'll need, according to Richard Bergey, manager, permits and licences with the City.

"You don't need to hire someone to do up your plans, if you don't want to," he says. "Anyone can do them; you don't have to be a professional designer. It just has to be determined that the planned construction is in compliance with the building code. You can draw your own plans, buy a design, hire a draftsman, an architect, or an engineer."

One particular area of plan design that Richard has seen numerous problems with is roof design, pertaining to snow load. "A lot of the plans I see are designed to withstand 45 pounds per square-foot of snow load. While this meets the city standards of 43 pounds minimum, it doesn't meet the district standards of 48 pounds. So you can see, you have to be careful."

Far beyond your vision of the interior and exterior of your house, a final set of house-building plans comprises a number of elements, all intended to meet basic building requirements, and all required to be in place before anyone even picks up a shovel.

Namely, your drawings



Provided you organize yourself ahead of time, you shouldn't have to worry about inspectors such as Acting Regional Electrical Manager Bob Cochran coming around and telling you to redo all your hard work.

are to be to scale, and show dimensions. A site plan is necessary, illustrating the site and location of the house on the site. Also required are a foundation plan, and floor plans; that is, a plan for each floor of the house. Elevation drawings — the perspective of the house from the outside — must also be included, as well as a cross-section drawing of the house, illustrating what you would see in the way of construction materials, if you cut the house in half. You'll need a plan showing your truss

design, with this usually supplied by the truss manufacturer.

▼The work begins...

The plans are in place, and you're preparing for the start of your creation. If the budget is fairly tight, you may be planning on doing a good portion of the work yourself, and this too, is fine, according to Richard. "You can do everything yourself, from your own initial design, right through to the landscaping." But with the crucial tasks, the parts of the construction that fall

under an inspector's careful eye, you will be required by the respective plumbing, gas and electrical inspectors to demonstrate you're capable of doing things right.

"The gas inspector has a questionnaire," says Richard, "and you need to provide a schematic layout of your plumbing system to the plumbing inspector." Even though there is no specific test applicable to the electrical system, Richard advises exercising caution in any work you're considering doing yourself. "You have to know that the inspector can come

along, look things over and tell you to rip it all out and begin again. That can be devastating!"

"A qualified relative or friend can be a big help," he notes, adding, "I think everybody knows an electrician. You have to know how to lay out the systems. That's vital."

Certain building circumstances can require professional assistance, such as the need for a professional engineer to supervise the compaction of soil, where it exceeds two feet in depth. "A wood foundation also

requires the design and review of a professional engineer," Richard adds. "Steel beams, log houses and retaining walls may require professional review. You need to contact the City's development services on this one," he advises.

▼Facing the Inspector

Required inspections occur at numerous stages throughout the home construction process. Inspection is required before you pour your footings and concrete, and prior to foundation construction. Your damp proofing must be inspected before proceeding with backfilling, all interior slabs must be inspected prior to pouring concrete, and your framing and insulation will be inspected. Your plumbing system will be subjected to a fairly rigorous, ongoing inspection process, usually requiring the plumbing inspector to show up on your doorstep about four times during the course of construction, says Richard. A final, overall inspection of your new home takes place when your house is completed, and ready for occupancy.

Following are the four inspection authorities you'll be adding to your Christmas card list:

- 1) Permits & Licences Division - City of Prince George
- 2) Fraser/Fort George Regional District (if building outside city limits)
- 3) Provincial gas inspector
- 4) Provincial electrical inspector

THE PROFESSIONAL'S CHOICE

WHAT IS A PROFESSIONAL HOME INSPECTION SERVICE?

A Professional Home Inspection Service is a service to help buyers assess the pros and cons when buying a home "Buying a home should not be a guessing game," Says Ian Carson of Pillar to Post.

Pillar to Post is designed to give home buyers confidence by relying on a detailed report of the home's pros and cons. "We visually inspect the home and make our report right on the spot," he says. "And purchasers are encouraged to join us on the inspection if they wish". A typical inspection takes three hours

which includes the roof and chimneys, the building exterior, the structure and foundation, the electrical, heating and cooling systems; the plumbing; major appliances; and the overall property and site.

At an average cost of \$300.00 per inspection. "It's a modest cost to ensure no emergency expenditures are going to pop up just as soon as you've arranged your mortgage," Carson says. The real benefit is the peace of mind that comes from having a better idea

of the home's anticipated maintenance costs. A home repair manual is also provided, allowing the new homeowners to tackle minor repair and maintenance items on their own.

The people at Pillar to Post are determined to work hand-in-hand with other professionals involved in residential sales to make home purchases a satisfying experience.



Professional Home Inspection
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