



building a successful log home

BY DENNIS & ANNE-MARIE ANDERSON

Every log distributor will be quick to emphasize the brand they represent is the only way to go. Well, as a general contractor who has worked with many brands, I can assure you that all log packages are not created equal and not all lots will work with all log packages.

Today's contemporary log homes can follow almost any floor plan and incorporate many different custom designs.

Do Your Homework And Secure Your Lot

It is a tough road for an unschooled consumer to decipher the complexities and variations of a log company's product line before committing to such an endeavor. It is very difficult to compare "apples to apples" since every log home distributor offers an alternative building system and log species. The tragedy is that most of the critical questions may not be identified until the project has commenced. As a local general contractor, I have found myself assisting in remedies to problems that arise when a contractor is out of his element. Remember, one of the most important tasks you contribute to in the success of your project, is to research and interview a local general contractor that you are comfortable working with.

Your second task for a successful log home is acquiring a quality parcel of land. The topography of the lot itself has much to do with the type and style of log home you will build. It is imperative to have your general contractor's input and be part of the process to avoid unforeseen obstacles since every county or municipality has different building requirements.

After the land is secured, the first decision you need to make is whether to build a manufactured or handcrafted home. Manufactured log homes are produced in a mill where the logs are sawed, planed or shaped to a specific size and uniform profile. Conversely, handcrafted homes are produced from whole logs by craftsmen. Each log is usually hand peeled and individually selected for each home. These two styles result in remarkably



Stunning interior of an Anderson Custom Homes log house, above

different appearances. Handcrafted homes use larger whole logs that retain their natural taper and are more individualized whereas a manufactured log home has a more uniform appearance.

Next, you need to decide on the species of log. Each type of tree such as cedar, pine and spruce have their own individual look and characteristics which contribute to the design and durability of your home. A good general contractor will assist you in choosing the log style and species that will best suit your personality, lifestyle and budget.

Personally, I prefer a log diameter of no less than 12" to 14" pine or 14" to 18" cedar. Logs also are available in both larger and smaller sizes and prices are adjusted accordingly. The larger Western Red Cedar logs generally are imported from Canada and cost more. However, the

additional expenses are often offset by the one of a kind aesthetic appeal that the home will take on as well as the additional energy savings for years to come.

Larger logs tend to be more energy efficient due to a higher "R" value and thermal mass.

Obtaining Realistic Cost Information and Financing

On average, the construction of a log home can be 15% to 20% more than a conventionally framed structure. It has been my experience that the cost to complete your log home will be three to four times the amount of your log package. Because of the additional labor required for a handcrafted log, these packages tend to be more expensive. In addition, log species can play a major role on the bottom line. Pine and spruce packages generally run less than cedar.

Other line items that can sway your expenses will include architectural design, a sprawling foundation that compounds the log set and roof system, extensive site work, utilities, heating system, electrical, plumbing, and the degree of interior and exterior finishes. These costs can vary greatly depending upon the topography of your lot, your personal preferences and the building requirements in your county.

According to the Log Home Council, baby boomers are trading in their large traditional homes for smaller log homes with higher end finishes. By not overbuilding, a desirable dimension is obtained by adding higher end aesthetic features such as a vaulted great room, dormers, covered porches and decks, a high quality window, door and cabinet package, superior interior finishes, rock work and landscaping. On many of Colorado's sloped lots,

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an efficient use of the space might include a tuck-under garage. Utilities can be centrally located in the walk out level and arranged for optimal disbursement and efficiency.

Green Building And Sustainability

More clients are interested in building green with sustainable materials. Log homes are the epitome of sustainability. They are renewable, biodegradable, recyclable, energy efficient and beautiful. Additional new green-building technologies incorporated into log homes include materials such as cellulose insulation, recycled roofing shingles, Energy Star double or triple pane windows and wood finishes with low amounts of volatile organic compounds. New innovations in renewable energy systems also have become very popular. Log homes can be powered and/or heated with wood, geothermal, wind, solar and even corn.

As the client, your most important goal is to be informed. By following these steps, for years to come, your log home will be a symbol of personal heritage to be passed down to the next generation with pride. Andre Cheigny says it best: "A house is built with wood and beams; a home is built with logs and dreams."

Dennis and Anne-Marie Anderson are the owners of Anderson Custom Homes LLC and are authorized, independent distributors of Pioneer Log Homes of British Columbia. Contact them at www.liveinlog.com.

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