

FROM DREAM HOME



TO REAL HOME

BY JENNIFER JACOBY-SMITH

You've been dreaming about it for years. When you close your eyes you can see it, but getting your dream house from an abstract idea to reality is a job for Brett Johnson and his design team at Final Draft Co. Ltd.

Johnson, along with a team of five architectural technologists, completes between 200 and 300 projects each year. Most of those projects are residential builds. In designing a custom-built dream home for a client, Final Draft can either work directly with the home owners or more commonly with a builder.

Having a builder involved from the start offers several advantages for the home owner. Certain builders may be known for building houses of a specific genre. Already your choice of builder may tell Johnson what type of design suits you best.

"Through the process of it, the builder will also have input into, obviously the style, but also the type of construction. There are different styles of framing, different styles of foundation work. They may have a preference as

to how some things are done," Johnson says. "They may have some preference on construction. There are multiple ways to insulate a house. They already have a template for how they'd like it done. So it's nice to have them in from the beginning."

The builder generally has trusted networks of contractors and sub-contractors. That experience can save you time and money, not to mention headaches, down the road. It would also be up to the builder to guarantee the work contractors are hired to do.

To get started, Johnson and staff meet with clients and go through a series of questions.

"Basically [we're] getting an idea of how you live your life, what your lifestyle is like," says Johnson. "[We are] bringing out all the different aspects of what they might want individually and getting a good grasp of how they're going to use their house."

Some home owners ask for media rooms, computer rooms, hobby rooms or enclosed pools.



Johnson and his team have to get very detailed in scoping out the home owners' vision for each room. In the kitchen, for example, Johnson may ask questions such as... Is there an island? Is the island raised? Is it lowered? Is there a pantry? Is your pantry a cabinet pantry or a walk-in pantry? Is your fridge going to order milk for you?

The location of the house-to-be also influences the design. An acreage property, for instance, may want to take advantage of a certain view or feature of the landscape. A house may be positioned in a certain way on a property to get more light or limit a trouble spot.

As well, new developments often have strict architectural controls dictating certain styles or colours Johnson and his team can employ. It's important to know these ahead of time.

The climate is an important consideration when designing a house in Saskatchewan. While many design features – such as

a two-sided fireplace that straddles the wall between the living room and your deck – might seem like a beautiful addition, the cold weather might make it impractical.

Johnson suggests starting a collection of pictures, sketches, or websites of design elements you like. These can serve as a starting point for Johnson's team. The internet can be an invaluable resource – allowing a potential home owner to see various types of designs or styles of finishes without leaving their chair.

"The best way I can think of for a person or owner coming in and getting the best result from a company like mine is to have as much homework done beforehand," advises Johnson. "Our job basically is to be able to read and bring out the thoughts and ideas from what our customers want and put it down on paper."

It may take several meetings for the designers to get enough information to complete the home design. Final Draft will then

present a concept plan. Sometimes Johnson says they may only do a concept plan once, but more often it changes and evolves to better meet the clients' needs.

Upon approval from the client, Final Draft does what is called a check set – which is a completed set of drawings. This set of drawings is the official set of blueprints and will include all floor plans, elevations, and electrical schematics.

Once a client signs off the check set, they can get an estimate and build their house. More and more often, however, house plans are having to be reviewed by an engineer. In such cases, Final Draft works in conjunction with an engineer to make sure the design is compliant and structurally sound.

The process of making your dream home a reality can take months or even years. But the creativity of Johnson and his team can make the process a lot more fun and rewarding. In the end you'll be able to enjoy a home that is reflects you in every way. **LS**

