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INSIDEOUT

Cayman's Home & Living Magazine

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The Home Edition

The dream of owning your own home is a common saying, yet many people have no idea how to make this dream become reality. In each edition of InsideOut we take our readers through homes that was once nothing more than a dream, emotions spawned by experiences to be recaptured and created in a form from the minds' eye. In the Home Edition section that follows, we explore some of the processes, products and important factors to consider when building your home.

From the ground up

By NATASHA WERE

Photos by JUSTIN UZZELL

The home of your dreams may not exist. Until you build it, that is.

Turn your dreams into reality by designing and building your own home—the one that perfectly suits your family, your lifestyle and your budget.

Building a home is a complex process, with many factors to consider.

With the right team working towards a common goal, however, it can be a stress-free experience, as the Phoenix Group demonstrated when building their show home for the Watts family (turn to page 52, Built on dreams, to see the finished home).

Our step by step guide shows you the easy way to do it.

Establish a budget

First and foremost, you need to establish how much you want to spend.

Talk to your bank about what you can afford: not just the land and construction costs, but also the 'soft costs' such as architectural and engineering fees, government permits, quantity surveyor fees and the furnishings and electronics.

Once the home is built, operational costs will not be limited to mortgage repayments. Utilities, insurance, pool

and garden maintenance, and a number of other costs need to be factored into your monthly outgoings.

Building a home you cannot afford to live in will take the joy out of the experience, which is why the Phoenix Group urge homeowners to plan within their means.

Location, location, location

Once you know how much you have to spend, you need to select a plot of land.

Most people have a general geographic area in mind. Practical considerations, such as the commute to work, location of schools, and proximity to friends, family, shops and services will help to determine where you want to reside.

If you do not already have a place in mind, it is important to consider what is important to you when it comes to location.

Do you want to be at the water's edge? If so, would canal front or sea front be preferable? Or would the lower cost of inland lots give you the flexibility to build a larger home?

It is also vital to establish the ground composition of the lot as this will have a significant impact on construction



Phoenix Group's Design-Build Team (Left to right)
Troy Rankin, Tami Scott, Neil Rooney, Shayne Howe, Louis Mussington, Ian Haughton.

costs. A geotechnical investigation will ascertain whether the ground below the house is solid enough to build on. If not, concrete pilings will have to be put down to ensure the structure's stability. This will significantly increase costs, which may in turn necessitate cutting costs elsewhere.

Getting started

Once the land has been selected the process of designing the home can begin.

The traditional design-bid-build process has significant downsides, says Neil Rooney of Exeter Property Development, which is under the umbrella of the Phoenix Group. In this model, home owners contract an architect to design their dream home. Once the designs are complete, they are put out to tender and general contractors submit their bids. Only then do the home owners find out what their new house is likely to cost. By this point, they could already have racked up close to \$40,000 in costs.

When estimates exceed the homeowners' finances they have to go through the painful process of

eliminating certain features, designing a smaller home or compromising on the quality of finishes to stay within their budget.

The temptation with this model is, of course, to go with the lowest bidder, but such a choice is rarely without its pitfalls and the end quality is often poor, Neil says.

The Phoenix Group work with an alternative design-build delivery system, whereby the builder and architect work together from the outset. Within just four design meetings, the builder and architect produce not only a schematic design showing floor plans and all four elevations, but a costing for the whole project, including finishes. Specific materials are not chosen at this stage, but from experience, they can accurately calculate a cost per square foot on kitchens, bathrooms and the rooms in the home. When it comes to actually finishing these areas, the owners already know the budget they have to play with.

This approach therefore ensures that budget, size and finishes all fit together.

It's a method that saves home owners from having to lose floor space, or take out features they had set their heart

What type of life insurance should you purchase?

As people mature, settle down, buy a home and start a family, their financial obligations tend to increase. As the main breadwinner, you may be responsible for covering mortgage repayments, children's school fees, loans and all the day to day expenses a family incurs.

If you were to die, what would your dependents do without your income to cover costs? This is the principal incentive for taking out life insurance: it can provide an income replacement for your beneficiaries.

As with any type of insurance, there are a number of options:

TERM INSURANCE:

Purchase cover for a fixed length of time. Should you die before the end of the term, your beneficiaries will receive the payout. Many policies offer the possibility of having your payments reimbursed at the end of the term period, less benefits paid out.

PERMANENT INSURANCE:

This offers protection for life and builds cash value against which you may borrow or make a withdrawal during your lifetime.

UNIVERSAL LIFE:

A flexible-premium contract, this allows the policy holder to adjust the premium or even skip payments in certain years, as well as being able to increase or decrease the stated death benefit.

WHOLE LIFE:

The most basic type of life insurance, your premium buys a specified death benefit and cash value which are guaranteed for the life of the policy. Although the premiums are generally higher than term premiums, they are guaranteed not to increase.

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because of financial constraints. As the Phoenix Group is both the builder and the designer in this situation, they take responsibility for any oversights, transferring risk from the owner to the company.

This approach also streamlines the process by enabling construction to be completed significantly faster than with traditional methods. The Phoenix Group's show home was built in under six months.

The design process

Initially the builder, the architect and the home owners will meet to gain a clear idea of what the latter wants. The Phoenix Group asks clients to put together clippings and pictures of interior and exterior spaces and styles that appeal to them.

Usually the architect takes care of the home's interior design, Neil explains, but if the home owners want a different interior designer, they would be involved from the earliest stages of the process.

Through these meetings the architect will be able to create a picture of the family's lifestyle and how they see themselves living in the space.

For the Phoenix Group's show home, the Watts were asked to write a wish list of features and functions that they wanted.

The number of children in a family, and the chance that there will be more in the years to come, will determine how many rooms the home needs.

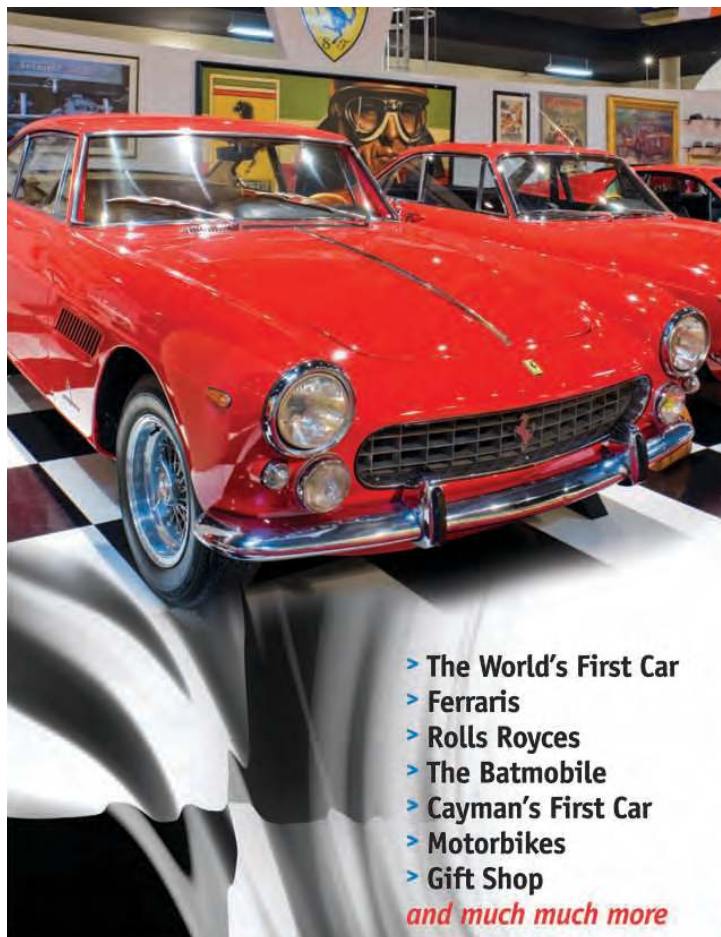
Conversely, couples who entertain may want larger living and social spaces and may require additional guest rooms.

Those who work from home may need a dedicated office while movie buffs may dream of a personal cinema.

Enthusiastic cooks will relish a spacious kitchen and those who love the outdoors would place more value on extensive terraces and gardens.

The location of one room in relation to another, as well as the size of rooms would be discussed in the meetings.

Parents may want their children's



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 - > Motorbikes
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- and much much more*

come and visit...
...and prepare to be **AMAZED!**



Cayman Motor Museum

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www.caymanmotormuseum.com



Museum Info

Opening times:
Mon - Sat: 9.00am-5.00pm

Admissions:

- Adults US\$15
- Children (Under 12) US\$7.50
- On Saturday, resident adults US\$10; children US\$5

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rooms close by, whereas they might prefer guest rooms to have independent access.

Those with a home office may prefer solitude in a space away from the living areas. For families, a two-car garage may not be essential but a shed where the father can hang his tools and take time out could be a must.

In addition to incorporating the features that the home owners want, the design team will examine the physical attributes of the plot in terms of sun, shade and wind direction.

The sketching can only begin when all this information has been gathered.


When it comes to size, the Phoenix Group encourage clients to go smaller where possible. The savings of a lower square footage can then be spent on superior finishes and materials. Less is truly more when it comes to building your dream home.

The designer will typically present the home owners with two or more options to start with. Once the home owners have chosen their preferred option, the designs are refined and modified over the months until the home owner is pleased with the final product. At this point, the designs are transferred to computer-aided design software (also known as CAD) and costings are undertaken.

Once the architectural blueprint is finished, the team of subcontractors who will install the electrics, plumbing and mechanics will work with the construction team to integrate their designs into the drawing set. The complete drawings are then ready to be submitted to the government for approval.

This is a good time for the home owners and the architect to meet with an interior decorator to discuss interior finishes, colour schemes, furniture and fabrics.

And relax....

Once the plans are approved, construction can begin. At this point, the home owners can relax, safe in the knowledge that a team of architects, general contractors and sub-contractors will take care of every detail. Slowly, this capable team will bring the home owners' dreams to life. 





custom closets

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Before

After





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