



VOL. 3. SUMMER 2017

COASTAL LUXURY

MAGAZINE FOR LUXURY LIVING ALONG NORTHWEST FLORIDA'S GULF COAST

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the Vision
IN WATERSOUND BEACH

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A Local
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From
NEAR COLLAPSE
to Better
THAN NEW

THE
Cost to Build
PER SQUARE FOOT

30A
MARKET REVIEW

What does it cost to build per square foot?

The answer is a complex one.

BY CHRIS BURCH



Home in Heritage Dunes in Seagrove Beach, photos by Modus photography

One of the most popular questions among potential buyers, real estate agents, builders, developers, bankers, and others in South Walton County is, *"What does it cost to build per square foot?"*

The answer is a complex one. Compare it to someone asking you "How much is it going to cost to go on a family vacation this year?" One would have to ask the starting point and destination. Is the family driving or flying? Are they staying in country or going overseas? Are the accommodations two-star or five-star? How many people are going? The number of questions in this simple analogy could get even more detailed. Builders and design professionals have similar responses when they are asked what it will cost to build in Walton County in terms of dollars per square foot.

This article will hopefully answer this question in our current market (providing a rough range) depending on the location and type of construction. Although, with the litany of new materials and finishes available for owners to choose from, the question can not be fully comprehended or answered without detailed construction plans and specifications.

Be advised that if you desire a 4,000 s.f. home and the estimated building cost is \$325 per square foot, this \$/ps.f. (dollar per square foot) cost also includes any allocation for the non-conditioned spaces: such as garages, swimming pools, outdoor kitchens, covered porches, or open observation towers, etc. Without any idea of the ancillary square footage outside of the conditioned living space, it is hard to estimate what impact they will have on the overall \$/ps.f.

The actual square footage of the heated and cooled area of the home also plays a significant impact on the \$/ps.f. cost. It stands to reason that building a larger home will cost more than building a smaller home, but the \$/ps.f. is more expensive on a smaller home. There are economies of scale at play when discussing \$/s.f. so building an 800 square foot carriage house of conditioned space will be more costly on a \$/s.f. basis vs. a 3,500 square foot home.

The better question to ask is not "How much per square foot to build a house (without detailed plans)", but rather,

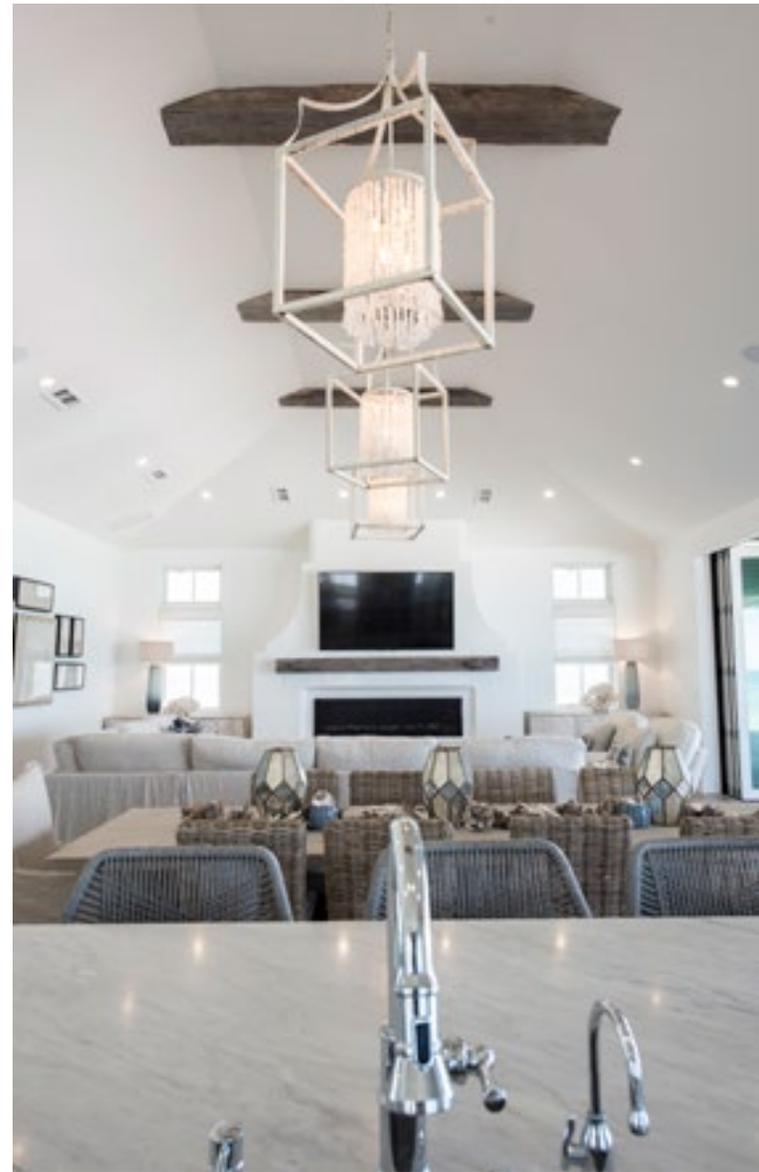
"My budget is X, so how much living space and other non-conditioned spaces can I build for this budget in this specific location?"

Opinions will vary depending on whom you ask, what exact materials you need, and the complexity of the construction. As stated above, square footage makes a big difference in this equation so we will assume a 3,500 square foot minimum home. Expect to pay a premium on building costs when building in developments that have many contractor restrictions and other factors such as no on-site subcontractor parking or no or limited on-site material storage.



Chris Burch

Chris Burch, MBA is owner of Grand Bay Construction, LLC, and has been building on the Emerald Coast since 2005. Grand Bay Construction seeks to not only set the standard in the Gulf Coast's construction industry but to surpass our customer's expectations. www.grandbayconstruction.com



3,500 S.F. LIVING SPACE

2 story wood framed construction: \$250-\$300 s.f.

Foundation is wood pilings, spread footings with CMU (concrete masonry unit) piers, monolithic slab, or concrete stem wall. Hardie plank siding, vinyl impact windows, and door package. Standard metal or architectural dimensional asphalt roof shingles. Average appliance package and moderate finishes. No swimming pool, average site work, two-car garage, and approximately 1,000 square feet of non-conditioned covered porch areas. \$180-\$220 per square foot. Upgrades to add higher end appliances & finishes, more detailed exterior trim, and vinyl or aluminum clad windows and doors.

3,500 S.F. LIVING SPACE

2 story concrete block construction: \$375-\$425 s.f.

Some poured in place walls & features. Foundation, spread footings with CMU piers, suspended slab, or concrete stem wall. Stucco over concrete block, with some accent wall feature. AL or vinyl clad impact windows and door package. Metal roof. Above average appliance package, and above average finishes. No swimming pool, average site work, two-car garage, and approximately 1,000 square feet of non-conditioned covered porch areas. \$300-\$375 per square foot. Upgrade to add swimming pool, concrete tile or wood shake roof, and higher end finishes.

GULF-FRONT CONSTRUCTION

3,500 S.F. LIVING SPACE

2-3 story concrete block construction:
\$450-\$700+ s.f.

Some poured in place walls. Wood or concrete augur cast pilings, all concrete foundation. Stucco over CMU with accent walls. AL or vinyl clad impact windows and door package. Vary roof type. Above average finishes. Swimming pool, extensive site preparation, two-car garage, and approximately 1,000 square feet of non-conditioned covered porch areas. Tight site logistics and staging areas.

In summary, know that you will likely get an ambiguous response when asking "How much will it cost to build per square foot in South Walton County?" unless you have decided on many of the items listed above.