



design / build

professionals



homeowner's guide to cost per square foot



getting started



Well-designed spaces, whether renovations, additions, or custom builds, don't happen by mistake. The process of uncovering a best fit solution for a project calls for a great deal of planning & collaboration between you the homeowner and the professionals you choose to work with.

For most homeowners, guidance through the many possibilities is essential in understanding the pros & cons (and costs) to ultimately arrive at an ideal solution your own unique project.

In the early planning stages, it's natural to contact multiple professionals, inquiring about costs and attempting to get a sense of a budget. "Cost per square foot" is often referenced as homeowners compare different builder's pricing models. There is nothing wrong with this exercise, in fact, it can be very helpful. But it can also be very confusing as the definition of what goes into the calculations greatly varies.

There is no "universal" definition of cost per square foot. If you ask 10 different builders to define sq. ft pricing, you will get 10 different responses on what's included.

This document explains how Kawartha Lakes Construction arrives at price per. sq ft and what we include in our definition.

Our hope is that you will use this information to better understand "price per square foot" in a way that makes better sense and empowers you to interview contractors as you set out planning your project.

refining cost per.sq.ft

At Kawartha Lakes Construction, we account for our projects in a 26-division breakdown of cost. Our definition of square foot pricing requires an understanding of this 26-division breakdown.

Each division has a further 4 sub-categories including labour, materials, sub-trades and rentals for a total of 104 subcategories. Each line of cost data helps define the scope of work being performed. Division 1 starts with permit fees and any associated planning/design fees. It includes everything that gets spent on a job from demolition to tree removal, site clearing, road access, well, septic, electrical hook-up etc.

The final division covers clean-up tipping fees which include items such as window washing, carpet cleaning...anything required to progress a project to a presentable state when turned over to our client. Every dollar that gets spent on a project is covered in our model.

DIV	DESCRIPTION
01	PERMITS & ENGINEERING
	FOUNDATION
02	Site Work
03	Excavation
04	Concrete Floors
05	Footings & Foundation
	BUILDING SHELL
06	Framing
07	Roofing
08-A	Decks & Docks
08-B	Screen Porch
09-A	Siding
10	Windows & Ext Doors
	MECHANICALS
12	Plumbing
13	HVAC (Heating & Cooling)
14	Electrical
15	Insulation
	FINISHING
16-A	Drywall
16-B	Interior Walls & Ceiling Other
17	Trim & Interior Doors
18	Cabinetry & Countertops
19	Specialty Items
20	Flooring & Tile
21	Paint & Stain
22	CLEANUP / RESTORE
23	LANDSCAPING/PAVING/SEPTIC
26	Overhead / Project Administration
	Subtotal
01	Conceptual Design Fees
01	Structural Design Fees
	Subtotal
	HST
	TOTAL



Refer to the “High Low” budget range example (below) to get a sense of how we use the 26 cost divisions to present initial estimates. You’ll notice our initial budgets include a high side and a low side.

We use past project histories as a comparable when setting an initial budget. Then, as we begin refining the plans & details, the budget becomes more defined. As choices are made, budgets are further refined with actual specs, makes/models and the chosen selections allowing a fixed cost pricing structure to be determined prior to construction.

“High Low” Budget Range Example

THIS BUDGET IS BASED ON HISTORICAL DATA OF SIMILAR PROJECTS. THE FINAL COSTS ARE DETERMINED THROUGH CONCEPT & STRUCTURAL DESIGN PHASES AND SELECTIONS					
DIV	ITEM	HIGH		LOW	
01	PERMITS & ENGINEERING	1,397.36	Building permit	1,397.36	
	FOUNDATION	21,995.62	Demolish the interior of the cottage required to renovate. Build point loads to support a second floor.	20,369.11	Final costs to be determined through the design phase.
02	Site Work				
03	Excavation				
04	Concrete Floors				
05	Footings & Foundation				
	BUILDING SHELL	196,424.98	Build a 2nd floor onto the existing roof, with 2 dormers. Build interior walls on both levels (floor plan to be determined). Build the roof to cover the deck & screen room. Install steel roof. Install footings & build a deck 205 SF & 355 SF screened room. Deck & railing to be PT. Install prefinished siding to the entire building. Install new windows & doors.	174,542.79	Costs of the building shell will be determined through the design phase. The deck railing is to be selected. The screened room finish is to be determined. Windows & doors need to be selected
06	Framing				
07	Roofing				
08-A	Decks & Docks				
08-B	Screen Porch				
09-A	Siding				
10	Windows & Ext Doors				
	MECHANICALS	44,729.29	Install plumbing for 2 bathroom, laundry & kitchen. Plumbing allowance included. Upgrade electrical panel to 200 amp service. Install electrical for new floor plan. Exterior walls to have rigid foam, roof to be insulated with spray foam. Install baseboard heaters	35,965.97	Plumbing selections to be selected to confirm pricing. Electrical layout is required to obtain a quote to confirm pricing. Insulation in the roof is batts.
12	Plumbing				
13	HVAC (Heating & Cooling)				
14	Electrical				
15	Insulation				
	FINISHING	112,341.21	Install drywall to all walls on both levels, ceiling on the 2nd level. Install new interior doors, baseboard & casing. Build a set of stairs on the exterior of the main building to access the upper level. Install closet interior rods/shelves. Install new flooring throughout. Install tile to the floor & shower / tub walls in the bathrooms, floor in the kitchen. Prime & paint the entire cottage. \$28,000 kitchen allowance	95,272.74	Finishing costs can not be confirmed until all the selections are made. \$18,000 kitchen allowance
16-A	Drywall				
16-B	Interior Walls & Ceiling Other				
17	Trim & Interior Doors				
18	Cabinetry & Countertops				
19	Specialty Items				
20	Flooring & Tile				
21	Paint & Stain				
22	CLEANUP / RESTORE	8,956.85		8,956.85	
23	LANDSCAPING/PAVING/SEPTIC	3,624.35	Grade for slope & seed the perimeter	3,624.35	
26	Overhead / Project Administration	43,638.16		38,210.70	
	Subtotal	433,107.82		378,339.87	
01	Conceptual Design Fees	8,720.66		7,351.46	
01	Structural Design Fees	10,827.70		9,458.50	
	Subtotal	\$ 452,656.17		\$ 395,149.82	
	HST	58,845.30		51,369.48	
	TOTAL	\$ 511,501.47		\$ 446,519.30	

tips from scott!



With over three decades of experience working with homeowners, KLC's founder Scott Wootton has seen it all! Below, he shares an example to keep in mind when interviewing contractors.

- Main floor : 2000 sq. ft finished space
- Basement : 1000 sq. ft finished space

= what square footage will be used for understanding the build cost?

In KLC's definition, creating a finished basement would require electrical, lighting, plumbing, possible mechanical, drywall, paint, trims, flooring, and clean-up. Costs could run \$100-\$175/sq. ft (using the divisions listed) for this 1000 sq. ft finished basement space, or \$100-\$175k of additional costs to the entire house project.

How do you account for this when comparing other's pricing models? If you only use the 2000 sq ft from the main floor but add the costs of finishing the basement the price /sq ft will be drastically different.

What if we want a deck, screened room, and garage? Do the costs and sq. footage for these components get rolled into the 2000 sq. ft of the main floor or get broken out?

Let's say:

- Deck : \$25,000
- Screened Room : \$75,000
- Garage : \$90,000

This represents \$190K of items outside of cost for the main house.

The question: Do we include these "extras" in the 2000 per. sq. ft house \$?

The answer: Some builders will, some won't.

KLC breaks out the components that go into a large project like this and assign separate values for each. If we add 190K for additional items, \$175k to finish the basement and assume a house build at \$250/ft for the 2000 sq. ft of main level (\$500,000) we are now up to \$865K for a 2000 sq. ft home.

That's \$432.50 per sq. ft by this definition. What about HST? 13% of 865k is \$112,450 or if divided by 2000, adds another \$56/sq ft to the equation! Now, the price of this house just reached \$977,450?!?! Do we have permits and a detailed plan yet?

I don't mean to be confusing, I'm illustrating how vital an understanding of the details is, and the importance of defining what's in/out of various builder's quotes.

beyond cost per square foot

We hope you find this guide helpful as you embark on researching and planning your project! Square foot calculations will help you to ask more and better questions when planning your project. To be honest, at KLC, we'd rather demonstrate where your money is spent by showing you by division what the options are that can effectively change the price. Then you not only comprehend how and why the cost is the cost, but you are empowered to confidently make decisions.

When working with KLC, you receive the following through our full-service, in-house planning process:

- Comprehensive 3D plans
- Detailed & defined scope of work notes
- Room-by-room selections storyboard with all exterior & interior finishes
- Fixed cost tender for construction based on those choices



Ready to explore? We'd love the opportunity to meet & introduce you to our planning process. Connect with us today to schedule an initial consultation where you'll meet members of our team & check out demonstrations of our work while we answer any questions you may have!



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