

How Long Does it Take?

The Single Family Residence (SFR) Timeline

Understandably, our potential home buyers and investors want to know how long it will take to build their one-off Single-Family Residence (SFR). This seems like a straightforward question, at least in terms of what the asker is trying to learn, but the reality is more complex.

Let's start by identifying the four separate phases of SFR construction: land acquisition and due diligence, planning, permitting, and construction.

Land Acquisition and Due Diligence

This phase begins with searching for and identifying a piece of property for a future build, followed by researching the feasibility of the intended build on that particular property.

To acquire land, the home buyer or investor works directly with a real estate agent making this part of the timeline dependent on how urgent the search is to the buyer and their agent. Once a property is identified, Ballast Design Build and the real estate agent conduct the due diligence research. This part can take anywhere from 7 to 21 days depending on the complexity of the property. On average, the time between putting in an offer and purchasing a property with due diligence included is approximately 30 days.

Planning

Planning is the process of designing new build plans or refining existing plans to fit a particular property. The timeline for designing a new/custom home plan for an individual property is dependent on the chosen architect's availability and workflow. This can take anywhere from thirty days to three months depending on the complexity of the project. Refining existing complete plans can usually be done in a matter of weeks.

Permitting

Permitting is the process of meeting all requirements set forth by the International Building Code (IRC) and the local municipality in which the build will be conducted. The construction drawings will go through reviews on several levels at the local municipal level to ensure conformity to building codes and local ordinances. These reviews include, but are not limited to a: zoning review¹, building review², site development review³, and an arborist's review⁴.

Often this process will be conducted by the builder, the architect or a third party known as a Permit Expediter. Custom plans can pose more of a permitting challenge, while a house design that has already gone through the approvals and has been built several times should get through the process fairly quickly. In addition to project complexity, this stage in the timeline is heavily dependent on the local building authority and how efficiently they are issuing permits. On average, it can take between six weeks and three months to receive a permit to build. In rare cases, it can take longer. It is important to note that this timing is dependent on the city's backlog and efficiency.

There are additional permits required for the mechanical phases of construction⁵ but these are approved quickly once the key permitting has been issued and generally happen as the build is underway.

Construction

The construction phase is just what it sounds like but includes some factors not everyone may be familiar with. This process generally takes between three months (on the very short end) to six months and is dependent on these important factors: the builder's organization and skill level, timely inspections from the local building authority and its willingness to quickly deal with any issues that arise, occasional supply chain issues, and lastly, due to the very nature of building a house, the weather.

By far, the element that causes the most delays on site is the local building authority and its ability and willingness to efficiently conduct inspections and resolve unanticipated issues as they arise. A seasoned builder will have key processes in place to mitigate these delays. However, it can be a challenge to keep a project 100% on schedule when an issue arises with the permitting authority during construction. At Ballast Design Build, we have created our own software application that streamlines the tracking of site progress and alerts us to potential delays before they arise. Our app is based on a wealth of experience with both the construction process and the local building authority.

For supply chain issues, we can help set expectations around these shortages and timelines. Sadly, we can't do much about the weather.

So How Long Does it Take?

After reading about the various processes, one might be thinking "turns out, it's a bit complicated", and they would be right. And, if you've been doing the math along with these processes, you can see that it could take anywhere from 6 months to a year or more, depending on how each phase is handled. But we believe that by keeping these processes transparent and the timelines realistic, we can work together towards the incredibly rewarding goal of a brand new, beautiful single-family home.

¹ Adherence to local ordinances

² Structure and mechanical

³ This review pertains to the property itself and is related to sewer, sanitation, water runoff, etc.

⁴ Preservation, care and maintenance of trees on site

⁵ Plumbing, HVAC and Electrical permits

