

## Appendix B Building Terms

This glossary may assist the residential owner-to-be in interfacing with their architect, developer, builder, and/or the ECC. It is not necessarily all inclusive.<sup>1</sup>

### Excavation Glossary

**BACKFILL**—Process of placing soil up against foundation after all necessary foundation treatments have been performed. In many instances, foundation wall must have temporary interior bracing or house framed-in to support weight of dirt until it has had time to settle.

**BATTER BOARD**—A pair of horizontal boards nailed to vertical posts set at the corners of an excavation area used to indicate the desired level of excavation. Also used for fastening taut strings to indicate outlines of the foundation walls.

**BERM**— Built-up mound of dirt for drainage and landscaping.

**BUILDER'S LEVEL**— A surveying tool consisting of an optical sighting scope and a measuring stick. It is used to check the level of batter boards and foundation.

**BULKHEAD**— Vertical drop in footing when changing from one depth to another.

**DRAG TIME**—Time required to haul heavy excavation equipment to and from the site.

**FILL DIRT**— Loose dirt. Normally dirt brought in from another location to fill a void. Sturdier than topsoil used under slabs, drives, and sidewalks.

**FINISH GRADE**—Final process of leveling and smoothing topsoil into final position prior to landscaping.

**FOOTING DITCH**— Trough area dug to accommodate concrete or footing forms.

**FROSTLINE**— The depth to which frost penetrates the soil. Footings should always be poured below this line to prevent cracking.

**GRADING**—Process of shaping the surface oft to give it the desired contours. See FINAL GRADE.

**KERF**— Vertical notch or cut made in a batter to where a string is fastened tightly.

**PLUMB**—The condition when something is vertical to the ground, such as the wall house.

**PLUMB BOB**— A weight attached to a string to indicate a plumb (vertical) condition.

**ROUGH GRADE**— First grading effort used to level terrain to approximate shape for drainage and landscaping.

**SETTLING**— Movement of unstable dirt over time. Fill dirt normally settles downward as it is compacted by its own weight or a structure above it.

**SILT FENCE**— A barrier constructed of plastic or bales of hay used to prevent the washing away of mud and silt from a cleared lot street or adjacent lots.

**STAKING**— To lay out the position of a home, the batter boards, excavation lines and depth(s).

**TOPSOIL**—Two or three inch layer of rich, soil. This must be removed from areas cleared or excavated and replaced in other later. Not for load bearing areas.

**TRANSIT**— Similar to a builder's level except that the instrument can be adjusted vertically for testing walls for plumb and laying out batter board, and establishing degree of a slope.

### Concrete Glossary

**AGGREGATE**-Irregular-shaped gravel suspended in cement.

**CRAWL SPACE**— Area below living area where no basement is used.

**CRUSHER RUN**— Crushed stone, normally up to 2" or 3" in size. Sharp edges. Used for drive and foundation support as a base. Very stable surface, as opposed to gravel, which is not very stable.

**CURING**— Process of maintaining proper moisture level and temperature (about 73 Fahrenheit) until the

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Dave McGuerty and Kent Lester, *The Complete Guide to Contracting Your Home*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., 1992.

design strength is achieved. Curing methods include adding moisture (sprinkling with water, applying wet coverings such as burlap or straw) and retaining moisture (covering with waterproof materials such as polyurethane).

**EXPANSION JOINT**— A joint or gap between concrete structure to allow for expansion and contraction of the structures without cracking.

**FLOATING**— A process used after screeding to provide a smoother surface. The process normally involves embedding larger aggregate below the surface by vibrating, removing imperfections, high and low spots and compacting the surface concrete.

**FOOTING**— Lowest perimeter portion of a structure resting on firm soil or rock that supports the weight of the structure.

**HYDRATION**—The chemical process wherein Portland cement becomes a bonding agent as water is slowly removed from the mixture. The rate of hydration determines the strength of the bond and hence the strength of the concrete. Hydration stops when all the water has been removed. Once hydration stops, it cannot be restarted.

**LINE**— A string pulled tight. Normally used to check or establish straightness.

**LINTEL**— A section of precast concrete placed over doors and windows.

**PARGING**— Thin coatings (”) of mortar applied to the exterior face of concrete block where block wall and footing meet; serves as a waterproofing mechanism.

**PLASTIC**—Term interchangeable with “wet” as in “plastic cement”.

**POLY**— Polyethylene. A heavy gauge plastic used for vapor barriers and material protection. The accepted thickness is 6 mil.

**RE-BAR**— Metal rods used to improve the strength of concrete structures.

**SCREEDING**—The process of running a straightedge over the top of forms to produce a smooth surface on wet (plastic) cement. The screeding proceeds in one direction, normally in a sawing motion.

**STOOP ARMS**— Section of foundation wall extending out perpendicular to exterior wall used to support a masonry or stone stoop.

**TERMITE SHIELD**— A shield, normally of galvanized sheet metal, placed between footing and foundation wall to prevent the passage of termites.

**TROWELING**—A process used after floating to provide an even smoother surface.

**WIRE MESH**— A heavy gauge steel mesh sold in rolls for providing reinforcing in concrete slabs.

## Framing Glossary

**BAY WINDOW**— Any window that projects out from the walls of the structure.

**BEAM**— A long piece of lumber or metal used to support a load placed at right angles to the beam usually floor joists.

**BOARD FOOT**— A unit of measurement equal to a 1” thick piece of wood one foot square. Thickness x Length x Width equals board feet.

**BRACE**— Diagonally framed member used to temporarily hold wall in place during framing.

**BRIDGING**— Diagonal metal or wood cross braces installed between joists to prevent twisting and to spread the load to adjoining joists.

**BUTT JOINT**— Junction of the ends of two framing members such as on a sill. Normally a square cut joint.

**CASEMENT WINDOW**—A window that swings out to the side on hinges.

**CORNER BRACES**— Diagonal bracing in the corners of a structure used to improve rigidity.

**CRICKET**—A sloped area at the intersection of a vertical surface and the roof, such as a chimney. Used to channel off water that might otherwise get trapped behind the vertical structure.

**CRIPPLE**— A short stud used as bracing under windows and other structural framing.

**DEAD LOAD**— The total weight of walls, floors and roof bearing on the structure.

**DEAD WOOD**— Wood used as backing for drywall.

**DRESSED SIZE**—Dimensions of lumber after planing smooth.

**DRIED IN**— Term describing the framed structure after the roof deck and protective tar paper have been installed.

**FACE NAILING**— Nailing applied perpendicular to the members. Also known as direct nailing.

**FIRRING**—Long strips of wood attached to walls or ceilings to allow attachment of drywall or ceiling tiles. Furring out refers to adding fining strips to a wall to bring it out further into a room. Fining down refers to using fining strips to lower a ceiling.

**GABLE**—The vertical section under the sloped part of a roof.

**GRAIN**—The direction of the fibers in the wood. Edge grain wood has been sawed parallel to the growth rings. Flat grain lumber is sawed perpendicular to the growth rings. Studs are flat grain lumber.

**GUSSET**—A piece of metal or wood used in trusses to connect bracing members together.

**HEADER**—One or two pieces of lumber installed over doors and windows to support the load above the opening.

**JAMB**— Exterior frame of a door.

**JOIST**— A long piece of lumber used to support the load of a floor or ceiling. Joists are always positioned on edge.

**KERF**—The area of a board removed by the saw when cutting.

**LAMINATED BEAM**—A very strong beam created from several smaller pieces of wood that have been glued together under heat and pressure.

**LINEAL FOOT**—A measure of lumber based on the actual length of the piece.

**LOAD BEARING WALL**— Any wall that supports the weight of other structural members.

**MASTIC**—Any pasty material used as a cement or protective coating. Usually comes in caulking tubes or 5 gallon cans.

**MITER JOINT**—Joint of two members each cut at a 45 deg angle.

**NOMINAL SIZE**— Original size of lumber when cut.

**ON CENTER (O.C.)** — Distance from the middle of one stud to the middle of the next middle of  
Normally refers to wall or joist framing of 12”, 16” or 18” O. C.

**PARTITION**—An interior wall in a framed structure dividing two spaces.

**PLATE**—A horizontal member used to anchor studs to the floor or ceiling. A sill plate anchors floor

**PIERS**—Concrete. supports for a floor beam.

**PURLIN**— A horizontal board that supports a roof rafter or stud to prevent bowing of the member by weight.

**RAFTER**—A long piece of lumber used in roof framing that supports the roof sheathing and shingles.

**RIPPING**— Cutting lumber parallel to the grain.

**SILL CAULK**— Mastic placed between top of foundation wall and sill studs to make an airtight seal.

**SPAN**—The distance between two supporting members of a joist or beam. The longest unsupported distance along a joist.

**STUD**— Standard 2 x 4 lumber normally cut to 8 or 10-foot nominal lengths used for framing walls.

**TOE NAILING**— Nailing at an angle (normally 45 deg) to bind two or more members. Normally used in nailing studs to plates.

**TONGUE and GROOVE**—Boards that join on edge with a groove on one unit and corresponding tongue on the other to interlock. Certain plywoods and hardwood flooring are tongue and grooved.

**TRAY CEILING**— Raised area in a ceiling. Looks like a small vaulted ceiling.

## Plumbing Glossary

**AIR CHAMBER**— Pipe appendage with trapped air added to a line to serve as a shock absorber to retard or eliminate air hammer.

**BACKFLOW**— The flow of water or other fluids or materials into the distributing source of potable water from any source other than its intended source.

**BEND**— Any change in direction of a line.

**BIBB**— Special cover used where lines are stubbed through an exterior wall.

**BUILDING DRAIN**—The common artery of the drainage system receiving the discharge from other drainage pipes inside the building conveying it to the sewer system outside the building.

**BUILDING SEWER**— That part of the drainage system extending from the building drain to a public or private sewer system.

**BUILDING SUPPLY**— The pipe carrying potable water from the water meter or other water source to points of distribution throughout the building and lot.

**CAP**— Hardware used to terminate any line.

**CLEAN-OUT**— A sealed opening in a pipe which can be screwed off to unclog the line if necessary.

**CPVC**— Chlorinated Poly Vinyl Chloride. A flexible form of water line recently introduced. No soldering involved. Plastic.

**ELBOW**— A section of line which is used to change directions. Normally at right angles.

**FIXTURE**— Any end point in a plumbing system used as a source of potable water. Fixtures normally include sinks, tubs, showers, spigots, sprinkler systems, washer connections and other related items.

**LINE**— Any section of plumbing whether it is copper, PVC, CPVC or cast iron.

**POTABLE WATER**— Water satisfactory for human consumption and domestic use, meeting the local health authority requirements.

**PVC**— Poly Vinyl Chloride. A form of plastic line used primarily for sewer and cold water supply.

**SEPTIC TANK**— A receptacle used for storage of water, retained solids and digesting organic matter through bacteria and discharging liquids into the soil (subsurface, disposal fields or seepage pits), as permitted by local health authorities.

**SOIL STACK**—A vent opening out to the roof, which allows the plumbing system to equalize with external air pressure and allows the sewer system to “breathe”.

**STOP VALVE**— A shut-off valve allowing water to be cutoff at a particular point in the system.

**TRAP**— A device providing a liquid seal which prevents the backflow of air without materially affecting the flow of sewage or waste water. “S” shaped drain traps are required in most building codes.

**VENT SYSTEM**— A pipe or network of pipes providing a flow of air to or from a drainage system to protect trap seals from siphonage or back pressure.

## HVAC Glossary

**BTU**— British Thermal Unit. A standard unit of hot or cold air output.

**COMPRESSOR**— Component of the central air-conditioning system which sits outside of dwelling.

**DAMPER**— A metal flap controlling the flow of conditioned air through ductwork.

**ELBOW**— Ductwork joint used to turn supply or return at any angle.

**EXHAUST**— Air saturated with carbon dioxide. The byproduct of natural gas combustion in a forced air gas system. This exhaust gas should be vented directly out the top of the roof. It is dangerous to breathe this gas.

**FREON**— A special liquid used by an air-conditioning compressor to move heat in or out of the dwelling. This fluid circulates in a closed system. This fluid is also used in refrigerators and freezers.

**PLENUM**— Chamber immediately outside of the HVAC unit where conditioned air feeds into all of the supplies.

**REGISTER**— Metal facing plate on wall where supply air is released into room and where air enters returns. Registers can be used to direct the flow of air.

**RETURN**— Ductwork leading back to the HVAC unit to be reconditioned.

**SUPPLY**— Ductwork leading from the HVAC unit to the registers.

**TON**— An industry standard measure to express a quantity of cold air produced by an air conditioning system.

## Electrical Glossary

**AMPERAGE**—The amount of current flow in a wire. Similar to the amount of water flowing in a pipe.

**CAN**— Recessed lighting fixture.

**CIRCUIT BREAKER**— A device to ensure that current overloads do not occur. A circuit breaker “breaks the circuit” when a dangerous overload or short circuit occurs.

**CONDUIT**—Metal pipe used to run wiring through when extra protection of wiring is needed or wiring is to be exposed.

**EER**— (Energy Efficiency Rating) A national rating required to be displayed on appliances measuring their efficient use of electrical power.

**GEM BOX**—A metal box installed in electrical rough-in that holds outlets, receptacles and other electrical units.

**GFI**— (Ground Fault Interrupter) An extra sensitive circuit breaker usually installed in outlets in bathrooms and exterior locations to provide additional protection against shock. Required now by most building codes.

**HOT**— A wire carrying current.

**SERVICE PANEL**— Junction where main electrical service to the home is split among the many circuits internal to the home. Circuit breakers should exist on each internal circuit.

**THIN WALL**—Thin flexible conduit used between outlet boxes.

**3 WAY SWITCH**— Type of switch that allows control of a lighting fixture from two switch locations such as both ends of a hallway.

**VOLTAGE**— The “force” of electrical potential. Similar to the pressure of water in a pipe.

**WATTAGE**—The product of the amperage times the voltage. A good indicator of the amount of electrical power needed to run the particular appliance. The higher the wattage, the more electricity used per hour.

### **Masonry and Stucco Glossary**

**ACID**— Cleaning agent used to clean brick.

**BAND**— Decorative trim around windows and doors and horizontal relief; normally 2x4 or 2x6.

**BEAD**— Any corner or edge that must be finished off with stucco.

**BRICK VENEER**—Exterior wall covered with brick.

**CORBEL**— Extending a course or courses of bricks beyond the face of a wall. No course should extend more than 2” beyond the course below it. Total corbeling projection should not exceed wall thickness.

**COURSE**— A horizontally laid set of bricks. A 32 course wall with 3/8” mortar joints stands 7 feet tall.

**CUBE**— A standard ordering unit for masonry block units (6 x 6 x 8).

**JOINT**— Mortar in between bricks or blocks.

**KEY**— Fancy decorative lintel above window made of brick, normally placed on various angles for a flared effect. Also known as a keystone.

**LATH**— A grid of some sort (normally metal or fiberglass) applied to exterior sheathing as a base for stucco.

**LINTEL**— A structural member placed above doors and window openings to support the weight of the bricks above the opening.

**QUOIN**— Fancy edging on outside corners made of brick veneer or stucco.

**ROW LOCK**— Intersecting bricks which overlap on outside corners.

**SOLIDS**— Solid bricks used for fireplace hearths, stoops, patios or driveways.

**STOOP IRON**— Corrugated iron sheeting used as a base for the tip of a brick or stone stoop. This is to eliminate the need for completely filling the stoop area with fill dirt (which may settle) or concrete.

**TRIG**— A string support for guide lines to prevent sagging and wind disturbances on long expanses of wall.

**WATER LINE**-Decorative relief line around foundation approximately 3’ from the ground.

**WEEP HOLE**— Small gap in brick wall, normally on garage, that allows water to drain.

**WOOD MOLD**—A brick making process in which bricks are actually molded instead of extruded. Fancy shapes are the result of this process.

### Siding and Cornice Glossary

**BED MOLDING**—The trim piece (molding) that covers the intersection of the vertical wall and any overhanging horizontal surface, such as the *soffit*. In a series of moldings, the lowest one.

**CORNICE**— When used on the outside of the house, the trim work that finishes off the intersection of the roof and siding. The cornice may be flush with the siding or may overhang the siding by as much as 2'.

**CROWN MOLDING**— The trim piece that tops off the trim on a vertical structure. Usually refers to the more ornamental pieces of cornice trim. Can also refer to the ornamental trim applied between the fascia and the roof.

**EAVES**—The portion of the roof that extends beyond the outside walls of the house. The main function of an overhanging eave is to provide visual separation of the roof and wall and to shelter the siding and windows from rain.

**FASCIA**— The vertical board on a cornice that covers the end of the rafter or the board that connects the top of the siding to the bottom of the *soffit*

**FRIEZE**— A vertical piece of wood used with or without molding to top off the intersection of the siding and the cornice. Frieze boards may be anywhere from 4" to 12" wide.

**GABLE**— The vertical part of the exterior wall that extends from the eaves upward to the peak or ridge of the roof. The gable may be covered with the same siding material as the exterior wall or may be trimmed with gable trim material.

**LOOKOUT**— The horizontal board (usually a 2x4 or 1x4) that connects the ends of the rafters to the siding. This board becomes the base for nailing on the *soffit* covering.

**SOFFIT**— The underside of the cornice or any part of the rood that overhangs the siding.