

**TIERRA CUSTOM
HOMES**

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The Comfort Zone

Award-winning builder Prokop Custom Homes feels at ease when working on any project, from a coastal home to a rural ranch.

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Owner Frank Porcari is hands-on, helping Ottawa Carleton's homes get done faster with high quality.

“They deal with me from beginning until they move in and I give them their keys. I treat every house like it's my own.” **FRANK PORCARI, OWNER**

PROFILE

OTTAWA CARLETON CONSTRUCTION
www.ottawacarletonconstruction.com / Revenue:\$5 million
 / Headquarters: Ottawa, Ontario / Employees: Five

Turn Dreams into Reality

Ottawa Carleton Construction's owner is with clients every step of the way while building their dream homes. **BY JANICE HOPPE**

Prospective buyers might be heard using the phrase, "It's average" when looking at homes on the market. But instead of settling for the same brick front or kitchen layout as their neighbors, homebuyers could be customizing their dream homes.

Ottawa Carleton Construction owner Frank Porcari says he doesn't do "average" homes and offers a personalized homebuying experience for each client in the greater Ottawa area. He is involved in the process from conception to completion. "When clients call us, they deal with me directly," Porcari says. "They hire me and I guide them. They deal with me from beginning until they move in and I give them their keys. I treat every house like it's my own."

CREATING THE DREAM HOME

Anyone looking to create their dream home has tons of ideas for added features to really make their home unique for their lifestyle. Buyers also create a budget and are particular in knowing where every dollar is spent. When developing a custom home, buyers want to know exactly where their money is going, Porcari says. His job is to give them the cost for everything – framing, shingles, appliances, etc. "That's management," Porcari says. "They can control where the money is going and where they want to put extra money."

Budgets are a nice idea, but in Porcari's experience, the work usually tends to exceed the customer's proposed dollar amount. "They budget, say, \$50,000 for work and once I look around, I think \$50,000 isn't enough. Maybe they need an extra \$10,000 to \$20,000. That's their choice."

Custom homes built by Ottawa Carleton Construction

range in price depending on the bells and whistles buyers want to include. Porcari says he has created homes from \$200,000 to over \$1 million. "It depends on the finishing, what they want on the inside and what they pick outside," he adds. "There are a lot of things to coordinate."

Ottawa Carleton Construction's most popular request is for home automation. This includes centralized control of lighting, cameras, temperature controls, appliances, gates and doors. "Almost every house we build has home automation," Porcari explains. "It's very popular. If the owners go out of town they can control lights, see who is ringing their doorbell – it's a piece of mind. Every house is going that way."

Change-orders happen all the time, Porcari notes. However, he suggests any changes should be made in the framing stage. Clients have to look around and be sure they like how a door is opening or the size of a room, for instance. Once the framing is done, drywall begins and changes can't be made. "We are happy to do it," he explains. "Can you move this? No problem. But now – in the framing stage – is the time."

Homes built by Porcari range in size from 3,000 to 8,000 square feet. For a 3,000 square foot house, the construction takes about five to six months, he says. "I maybe do it faster because I am a hands-on guy," Porcari adds. "I deal with the guys directly and I hand-pick my tradesmen. They come pretty quick. That does help the product get done faster and get the best product out there."

CONSTRUCTION BOOM

Keeping busy isn't a challenge for Porcari because he says he always has requests to build homes. His team is working on an 8,000-square-foot, two-story home located on about 10 acres of land near Munster Hamlet in Ontario. The lot includes a designer swimming pool, a stable and large storage building outside the main home. "The cost, I don't know yet," Porcari says. "He put a budget and he's way over. The budget was \$1.5 million. I think it may cost \$1.8 million."

If the custom home requests slow, the team always has other projects lined up. Ottawa Carleton Construction also has a presence in multi-unit buildings. The company is waiting on plan approval for a 20-unit condominium complex and is also in the process of building two "four-complexes" – two buildings with four apartment units in each.

STAYING PUT

It's not that Ottawa Carleton Construction can't see expansion opportunities; it's just not a move Porcari wants to gamble on – yet.

"I can expand," Porcari says. "I don't know, though, sometimes bigger isn't better. I would have to go out of my comfort zone, hire a foreman or two, and I don't know if I could find someone to treat my business like their own."

Porcari has built Ottawa Carleton Construction's reputation on his exceptional customer service. Clients know he is always going to be present on their job site and involved in the process from day one. He believes, however, that if he were to cover more areas, that level of customer service wouldn't happen anymore.

"Will the clients be happy?" Porcari asks. "All my clients like that I am in the whole process. I would probably lose control of that."

If expanding ever does become a possibility for Porcari's Ottawa Carleton construction, the jobs would need to become more spaced apart to make sure he could provide the same quality customer service, he says. "I built a rapport and I'm happy," Porcari says. "I love what I do." ■

