



Quality Craftsmanship | Stowe, Vermont

the craftsman.

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Working with out-of-state professionals



Kate Carter

By Kate Carter

Sisler Builders started building and renovating houses in Stowe, Vermont, 40 years ago. In that time a lot of things within the construction industry have evolved. Climate-related changes, such as going from no homes with air conditioning to every home having air conditioning, are noteworthy. Energy related changes, such as houses having a fossil-fuel-driven heating plant to homes with electrically driven heat pumps and geothermal heat pumps, many of which are solar powered, with no fossil fuels on the premises, are also significant. Convenience-driven changes, such as owners preferring to work with design professionals with whom they already have a relationship, rather than trying to work with a local design professional.

Recently, a higher percentage of Sisler Builders' projects have been with out-of-state owners, many who bring their own architect and interior design professionals to the project. For Sisler Builders's staff, this means establishing and cultivating a variety of new professional relationships, and they need to develop a rapport with a new team and learn how to effectively disseminate information within a new group.

"It's a dance, figuring out how to share information in a timely and efficient way," says owner Steve Sisler. "I've always enjoyed developing professional relationships, and I've done it in a variety of geographic locales, with building inspectors, zoning administrators, subcontractors, material supply houses, specialty vendors, interior designers, and architects. Now, with

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Out-of-state pros

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owners coming to town with their own design professionals, we get the excitement of developing new relationships right here at home!”

The days of being on the phone to describe and solve problems are in the rear-view mirror. Emailing and texting photos and videos and FaceTime calls have largely replaced the phone and significantly sped up effective decision making, as decisions don't always come quickly. Zoom conferences at a determined frequency have become the norm. Sisler Builders uses Google Photos for photo and video sharing, so anyone involved can see updates of how the project is moving along. We use another software to manage scheduling, so clients, architects, subcontractors, and designers all have access to the real-time schedule. It enables them to effectively manage and plan their time to provide us with the information we need to keep the project on schedule without someone having to send constant reminders.

“Professional relationships are about establishing good communication methods without stepping on anyone’s toes, and often the style of communication will dictate the method of communication,” says Sisler. “Once I’ve met with an out-of-state architect and designer and established a connection, I then introduce them and essentially hand them off to our project manager for the job. That project manager will be the one doing the heavy lifting, getting the bulk of the information from those design professionals. That project manager will handle the architectural drawings, the interior designer’s material choices, and the landscape architects site plans, and facilitate implementing them on site. I then become a moderator who can step in when there is friction or a slowdown in the flow of information. It occasionally becomes a bit of a tag team process to get and share information.”

Photos by Michael J. Lee are from our recently completed project “The See-through House.” It is a thoughtful collaboration between wonderful out-of-state owners and their non-local interior designer and architect, and with Sisler Builders. The chemistry between the owner and interior designer is apparent in the selection of materials, interesting wallpaper, light fixtures, tiles, furnishings, and cabinetry details. The home is thought provoking and restful. Alchemy! We are pleased that it will be published in “New England Home” magazine in November.





Long-term project manager Matt Rouleau, who has managed numerous projects for Sisler Builders, says that since Covid he has mastered Zoom calls and it's been a game changer. Rouleau is currently working on a project where the architect is in Colorado and the engineer is in Washington State. "Zoom calls are part of the routine now. Time zone differences can be a problem, but we always figure it out. Most important is good communication and a nice set of plans. No matter where the architect is, good plans make it easier, faster, and better."

Steve Sisler says it's great to work with local architects and designers, and also easier, because the relationship is already established, they know how each other works, and, therefore, less energy is expended. Typically, they have in-person meetings every other week or so, and they are as, if not more, productive, than Zoom calls.

"Some clients see the overall project benefit of using local architects and designers, similar to our established contacts with local vendors and subcontractors, while others have had previous experience with out-of-state architects and they feel their time is better spent working with them," Sisler explains. "Bottom line, we do our best to garner a fabulous outcome with whomever the client chooses. We've developed our processes and communication tools to work with both local and not so local professionals equally effectively."

In the News

I am happy to announce that my son, Luke, has been promoted to the company's chief operating officer. Luke has been a full-time employee with us for eight years. He has exhibited the commitment, intelligence, and desire to fulfill this role. I will remain as CEO for as long as needed. I am excited to have Luke's presence in the company and to recognize his commitment to maintaining Sisler Builders as a family business.

When I started the company 40 years ago I didn't have a vision of how things would pan out, but through family support and the long-term commitment of many of our employees, we have persevered and become a strong player in the local construction market. Having Luke involved will ensure that position will continue for as long as it is a priority. I will be around for the foreseeable future to help ensure that focus stays strong.

Congratulations to Luke and thanks everyone—employees, subcontractors, vendors, clients, friends, and family—for supporting him as he has grown within the company.

—Steve Sisler

In concert with our mission to help reduce fossil fuels, Sisler Builders' newsletter is going digital, but we will still publish a paper version for those who prefer it. If you'd prefer the digital version, please email us at info@SislerBuilders.com and we will get you on board with the spring edition. If we don't hear from you, we'll continue to send you our print version. Thank you for reading our semi-yearly newsletter!



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Ask the craftsmen.

What are the advantages of working with local builders, contractors, and vendors?

When a local builder works with the same local subcontractors and vendors repeatedly, they create a climate of mutual respect and integrity, which are what a small town requires for long-term success.

Sisler Builders has been building in Stowe—a community of 5,000 people—for 40 years and is positioned to be a business in Stowe for another 40 and more. On each project they strive to turn current clients into ambassadors and return customers. They do this by standing behind their work and requiring that their subcontractors and vendors have similar integrity. Working with a long-standing builder means relationships are already established and there is little to no waiting for subcontractors to become available.

COO Luke Sisler says, “Our experience gives us the expertise to know what it takes for long-term success, in relationships and property improvement. With local subcontractors and vendors, our consistency and longevity require that they also achieve success and are

available to us when the time comes.” This includes the punch-list as jobs are closing. It also includes unforeseen issues after completion. Sisler Builders stands behind their work and does whatever it takes to have happy customers. Out-of-town firms do not have the same incentive to maintain good relationships here in Stowe, since they have not developed relationships with locals and can find other long-distance markets.



This house was built in record time during Covid, thanks to our loyal and talented subcontractors and vendors.

Send your building question to
Ask@SislerBuilders.com.

We'll answer it in our next newsletter.

