

We are very pleased to recommend Dreamworks Construction without qualification, based upon our very positive experience with Dreamworks and its CEO, Toby Laughton, and we welcome the opportunity to describe our experience at a level of detail we hope will be useful to you if you are considering contracting with Dreamworks.

Our House. We live in a 22-year-old, 3800-square-foot S&S tract house of which we are the original owners. Until our Dreamworks project, we had done nothing at all to the house following our purchase and initial decoration of it, except to subject it to the usual level of wear and tear of life, including raising three children. When our children were old enough that it made sense to redo our house “nicely”, we went in search of a contractor, and found Dreamworks.

The Initial Project. Our initial project was to demolish our kitchen, breakfast room, family room (including filling in a sunken conversation pit, and removing the wall between the kitchen and family room to make a great room), powder room and laundry room to the studs; tear out all the windows and the sliding glass door along the back and one side of the house; completely reframe the first floor of the back of the house; put in three sets of French doors in place of the sliding glass doors and windows in the family room, and another set of French doors in place of the sliding glass door in the dining room; and build out a new kitchen and family, powder and laundry rooms. We also replaced all the flooring on the ground floor of the house (removing carpet, marble, wood and tile (!) and replacing all with travertine), replaced the stairs and banisters with a custom hand-built hardwood staircase, replaced all lighting and light fixtures in the entire house except in bedrooms and private bathrooms, and replaced linen cupboards and family room cabinetry. We replaced every window in the downstairs of the house. We engaged an architect to design our renovation, and she produced detailed plans. Much of the design detail, though, we worked out with Dreamworks, of which more below.

Quality of Work. Most important of all – the work Dreamworks did in our house is simply excellent. The quality of everything – walls and ceilings that were plastered and sanded until perfect as though Toby had his crews working on his own house, cabinetry, flooring, other stonework, window installation, stucco, everything – shows off our house so well that in the months since completion of the initial project we have found nothing that we wish we had done differently, or that we aren’t pleased with as to quality, finish and look (apart from the nits that make up the inevitable punch list). Visitors to our house are blown away, and so are we.

Value. We have spent a lot. By the time we’re done (of which more below), we will have spent significantly more than we paid for our house (admittedly not so much, as we bought 22 years ago). We believe we have gotten good value for our investment, and that our dollars are “in the house” – and they show. Toby has at every turn been clear and objective in presenting various options as to quality versus budget. We were so tired of tract-house quality cabinetry (old and beaten as well) that we opted for the best quality of cabinetry Toby had to offer, although he explained that we could save significantly by compromising on the cabinetry (which he advised we not do). Same with windows and French doors and various other decisions. So certainly our level of expenditure was our

choice, and we are very happy that we absolutely got everything we paid for, and that we got a quality of construction and finish commensurate with our investment.

Hand-Holding. We had never done this before. We were renovation virgins. We could not possibly have worked with a contractor whose bid came with a list of requested specifications of flooring and other materials for us to figure out on our own, because we would have had no idea what we were doing. Toby, on the other hand, worked with us closely in all of our material, fixture and color selections, guiding us toward choices that would work together. Toby was as involved in design matters as we wanted him to be, which was a lot. He accompanied us on every outing to pick materials (stone, granite, trim, fixtures, etc.) except our visits to the appliance store to choose our kitchen appliances. When we and Toby had selected the stone and glass tile for our kitchen backsplash, Toby personally designed the layout and pattern of the backsplash and described it to his workers, who executed on his design with fine craftsmanship. There were bits Toby wasn't happy with – how lines between tiles lined up in the design – that he had torn out and redone two or three times until he thought it looked right. We were fine with how it looked the first time, but he wasn't. The end result is beautiful. Toby also designed the stonework pattern for our entryway, which is warm and inviting and looks like a beautiful rug turned to stone – and is one of the prettiest things Dreamworks has done in our house.

Living through Construction. We chose not to move out, but rather to live in the house during construction. At times we were living in half the house, but we preferred that to moving out. Dreamworks worked around us, and left the house, including all work areas that weren't walled off, broom-clean every day at the end of the day. All of Dreamworks' workers were unfailingly polite and easy to have in the house. Dreamworks made living through construction as easy an experience as we can imagine it being.

Bidding and Contracting. We were very pleased with Toby's bidding and contracting practices. His budget allowances for materials remaining to be chosen were always fair, and when we changed our minds (e.g. slate floors turned to more expensive travertine), Toby was always clear from the start about the range of increased expense. Toby's bid, and contract, expressly stated what was covered and what wasn't. Toby had us purchase our appliances, and they were neither in his bid, nor in the base for his contractor's fee, although he took complete ownership of installing the appliances, except the few that the appliance store installed. When we made changes or additions that increased the cost of the job, the impact on the bottom line always appeared to be what it would have been if we had had Toby bid the changes or additions to start – there never was any issue of changes seeming to be more expensive because you can't go get a competing bid on a change. Not only did we never once feel nicked or dimed on anything, but instead we felt that there were many points at which we would have understood Toby having to present some additional cost to us, when he didn't.

Trustworthiness. Over the course of the initial project, we found Dreamworks – including everybody we dealt with, but in particular Toby, as all our business dealings were with him – to be completely trustworthy. No “grain of salt” ever needed to be taken

in hearing Toby's explanation of what would be required to achieve a result, what it would cost, or what the result would be. We have also dealt extensively with Jim, who oversaw our project once framing was completed, and in every respect, including especially follow-through on every loose end and unexpected wrinkle, Jim has been terrific. There are a number of respects in which we got more than we bargained for, and there is no respect in which we got less, or felt disappointed in any way. We have been treated as valued customers from start to finish, period.

Follow-on Project. By the time we were done with the initial project, we had completely renovated about two-thirds of our house – everything but bonus room, which we aren't renovating significantly, the three private bathrooms (as we had done the powder room), and the bedrooms. The significant unintended consequence of the extent of the initial project, and the quality of the work, was that the portion of the house we had not renovated wound up looking terribly dated and tired. With only a brief break to get our breath, we have embarked with Dreamworks upon the renovation of the balance of the house (bonus room excepted), gutting all three bathrooms (one at a time), doing a major renovation of the master bedroom (we re-engaged our architect for the redesign of the master suite), and changing windows, casements and baseboard molding, and painting, in the other bedrooms. When we're done with "phase 2," there will be next to nothing visible in the house that predates our work with Dreamworks (just the bonus room, in which we have done nothing but change out lighting and windows, and the carpet in the kids' rooms, which they wanted to keep), and we will have replaced every window and sliding glass door in the house, as well as the front doors. Dreamworks has already finished one full bath in the follow-on project, and it's gone from shabby and worn out to glowing with tumbled travertine tile, travertine floor, tub deck, shower bench and countertop, and a beautifully finished look. We can't wait until our house is finished, because what's done so far is everything we wanted, and more.

A Catch, We Suppose. The one gentle cautionary note we would sound is that in every time estimate for a complex project there are many potential causes for delay, and inevitably there are, and in our project there have been, delays. Some were caused by changes we made. Others were caused by matters outside Dreamworks' control, including building inspectors each of whom had a different rule book than the one before. Still others were just the realities of scheduling. It would be nuts to schedule a major renovation without plenty of leeway for delay. That being said, though, we were pleased with the total timeline for our initial project. Another catch, if it can be called that, is that our understanding of what we wanted evolved and grew over time, and so we kept expanding the project, which expanded the budget. Dreamworks was never complacent about any issue we overlooked, so there were never any budget surprises or issues Dreamworks hadn't called to our attention, but we kept adding whole rooms to the initial project, and changing our minds about significant materials (e.g. the floors), and that did have a budget impact!

The Bottom Line. We have trusted Dreamworks with our largest, and most important, asset, and our trust has been rewarded with excellent advice, design, construction and craftsmanship, a business and personal relationship that we value, and an end result that we treasure. We would engage Dreamworks again in a heartbeat, and we have no doubt

that as future projects arise we will do so. We are pleased to serve as a reference for Dreamworks, and so if you are seriously considering contracting with Dreamworks, we will be happy to speak with you, and proud to show you our home.

[Names and contact information available upon request]