

Rebuilding after the Waldo Canyon Fire Update - August 28, 2012

Written by Brian Einsweiler

Tuesday, 28 August 2012 16:56 - Last Updated Tuesday, 28 August 2012 17:09

<p>Well, the debris has been cleaned up from my lot for several weeks now. There's not much to look at besides the foundation, which is covered with burn marks and stains from when the ashes were soaked by rain after the fire. There's no question that the foundation is destroyed -- the fire was hot enough to melt re-bar inside the concrete, and you can run your hand on the edges and brush away chunks of cement.</p> <p>We've all been lacking input from the city and our HOA for some time, but a few useful bits of information have come forth through official and unofficial avenues. I made the decision a couple weeks ago to sign with a builder, go ahead with the project, and just put in the applications for approval and see what happens. I have chosen a full-custom home building company that is run by a friend of mine, Dave Ito, that I've known for several years from playing hockey. He runs Acordia Homes, which is known for building some pretty nice luxury houses. I approached Mr. Ito and asked if he could take on a smaller budgeted project like mine, and he immediately gave me confidence that he was the right choice for the job.</p> <p>The first item on the agenda was to have Mr. Ito quote out what it would have cost to rebuild my old house as it was before the fire. The insurance company gave me an estimate of this shortly after the incident to get the process started, but the estimate was incorrect and incomplete in many ways. The new estimate is about \$25,000 higher than what American Family had initially quoted. (Mostly they left out things like permit fees, utility reconnection, site supervision, etc...) I fired that off to the insurance company and am waiting while the adjuster chews away at the new numbers.</p> <p>In the meantime, I met with Mr. Ito this past weekend and discussed what's on deck to do next. I gave the go-ahead to go full speed and get as much done in parallel as we can during the pre-construction phase. First on the agenda was a soil test to see how expansive the soils in the area are and what kind of engineering and construction will need to go into the new foundation. Soils in this area are generally expansive, so we'll need the soil test to ensure we build the correct type of foundation footer for my lot.</p> <p>Additionally, we will be involving the home designer to get started on the draftwork of the floorplan, exterior elevations, and engineering drawings. I have a good idea of what I'd like to do with the new house. After looking through about 2,000 different floorplan options, I settled on a main floor from one house, and the upper floor from another. ♦My lot limits how wide I can build (about 34 feet), but I can still add many feet to the rear of the house before I start hitting problems with setbacks. The new house will probably be about 6 feet deeper than the previous house.</p> <p>The main floor will be inspired by this floorplan:</p> <p></p> <p>I've requested a few modifications to it, of course.</p> Mirror the layout since my garage has to be on the left due to the way my driveway approaches Remove the steps from the garage and front porch leading into the house Swap the kitchen and great room (should improve traffic flow and allow better placement of windows for the views on my specific lot) Stretch to 9' ceilings on the main floor Add a couple more windows (one or two small ones at the end of the great room, one more in the flex room, one on the side of the garage) <p>♦</p> <p>The upper level will be based on this floorplan:</p> <p></p> <p>But with the following changes:</p> Mirror layout as with the lower level Remove Bedroom 4 and make bedroom 2 and 3 a bit bigger and have a larger open loft ("tech center") area Add a vault to master bedroom ceiling Rearrange master bath to put in an oval soaking tub (with jets!) <p>The basement will be finished with a rec room, 4th bedroom, and a 3-piece bathroom. I'm going to have them excavate the full basement -- my old

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house had about 1/3 of it unexcavated and left as crawlspace for some reason. I've decided to build with 2x6 framing and extra insulation for energy efficiency reasons. It will be a few thousand extra up front, but should pay for itself over time. (Won't it be a treat to be able to turn the thermostat up to a reasonable temperature in the winter without worrying about a giant bill?). I'll probably be getting central AC as well, depending on how much it costs (probably sounds weird to those not from the area, but the old house didn't have it).

The exterior will be upgraded with fiber cement siding, 50-year architectural asphalt class A fire-resistant shingles, and a composite surface deck. These are all things the old house didn't have, but are newly-required by the building code covering the burn area. It should be more fire resistant, and definitely a lot easier to maintain. The new deck will be quite a bit smaller than the one on the old house. There was a massive two-story 34' x 8' deck previously, but now I can take the insurance money from that behemoth and apply it to energy efficiency upgrades -- I only really used about 1/4 of the old one anyway.

I'm anxiously awaiting what the home designer does with my requested changes to the floorplan, and curious to see how the exterior elevations will look. That's probably a few weeks away, though. ♦Once that's completed, we submit the exterior drawings to the HOA for approval. I've actually heard from one of the members of the HOA's architectural control committee, and it sounds like they're not going to be as picky as I had feared initially. Not that I was planning to build anything controversial, but I think we should be able to get a pretty quick approval for the plan. After that, it's off to the city's regional building department for approvals and permits. I think they're trying to make things go smoothly for those of us rebuilding, but we'll see!

{jcomments on}