

# THE METROPOLITAN BUILDER

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## Sherpa Builders' Partners On-Site from Day One to Day Done





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To say that Rahul Desai and Russell Wiefeling are hands-on builders is an understatement. The partners in Sherpa Builders are on-site six to eight hours every day, overseeing the two, three or four speculative homes they build each year, because “we’re really mindful of how they’re built,” stated Desai.

“Quality is our number one goal,” Wiefeling agreed. “If you walk through many other spec homes, you clearly see the difference. We hear it often from buyers and realtors. It doesn’t cost a lot more to build a really good home, but it does take more time and attention. We’re there from Day One to Day Done.”

Rahul confessed, “I do my best to find every flaw. If I see something wrong, I can’t walk away from it.” As an

example, he described a wall that was out of plumb. The subcontractor said the homeowner would never see it, but Rahul explained he would always know it was there. The wall was straightened immediately.

“We don’t leave anything to doubt; if we did, most likely the wrong thing would happen. Our time spent each day on the job sites is focused to reduce mistakes or on things being overlooked. You wouldn’t believe how many times we’ve stopped simple mistakes from happening just because we’re there,” Desai continued. “Subs do not enjoy coming back three or four times. Better to do it right the first time.”

His partner agreed. “You’ve got to be there. So much can





get ‘lost in translation’ [with so many trades involved].”

They prefer relationships with subcontractors who are family-run businesses, just as they are. “Dealing directly with subs who are the business owner is an immense advantage,” Rahul added. He has worked with several of his subs for more than 20 years.

Russell noted, “We’re there for every home inspection throughout the building process. If there’s a deficiency, we want to know what it is, and, as we are proficient in many building trades skills, we personally can more often make needed adjustments so that progress is not hindered.”

Desai and Wiefling are so confident in the quality of their homes that they have a Dare to Compare sheet that they give to prospective buyers. They tell them, “If you can find a better-built house, you should buy it.” And they hear







comments in return, such as, “This is the best built house we’ve seen” after they’ve walked through 30 others.

With its first 10 homes in the \$2 million + range, Sherpa has focused on “Inside the Loop Living,” including Afton Oaks, Southgate and West University Place. Its next project is a \$4 million home in Tanglewood.

Its single-family homes are basically designed for “malleable living,” according to Rahul, with a primary suite and three or four bedrooms, each with its own bathroom and closet. “There’s always a big social space upstairs and an outdoor living area. We also reserve as much space as possible on the lot for a pool.”

They work closely with an architect to ensure that the houses fit the lots and for each to have its own unique look. “We don’t want our houses to all look the same. Each of our homes are more custom to the lot and neighborhood,” Desai explained.

They use quality construction materials, including 5/8-inch sheetrock throughout the entire house, 2x6 framing, foam insulation and hardwood floors throughout. “These upgrades add more costs to the project but provide a much better home.

The two came to their building careers from completely different paths but both at a time when they were seeking





something new.

Rahul Desai worked in IT for 20 years until he took a severance package from Cisco in 2002 during a corporate downsizing. He slowly transitioned into building stick-frame hotels before starting Sherpa Construction (d/b/a Sherpa Builders) in 2015. His wife suggested the name Sherpa as Rahul is an avid mountaineer and had recently hiked to Everest Base Camp. There a Sherpa is the one who guides people to their destination, such as a dream home.

Recognizing that “another set of eyes makes homes better,”

he asked his friend Russell Wiefeling, originally a union steamfitter in Pittsburgh, to join him two years later when Russell’s 20-year encore career in sales with the Big Four accounting firm KPMG was ending.

The varied background of the two partners creates an unusually symbiotic relationship. They don’t split many responsibilities. Both focus on the tasks at hand and somehow it balances. We make a really good team. We both work equally hard. It takes care of itself,” Rahul explained.

Russell added, “I love this guy. He’s my brother.”





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