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 photograph by JON CANCELINO



Developing the Dream

As the early morning sun filters through the elegant windows, Jim McLaughlin, warmly known as “Jimmy” to his customers, sits in the expansive, welcoming living room of the home on Rose Terrace in Lake Forest. Although the house is not his own, much of its interior is the product of his design. “It was really in bad shape before we started, and the owner had confidence in us to do what we thought was right. And, as you can see, it’s absolutely beautiful,” Jimmy says.

Incorporated for 12 years, and working from his office in Libertyville, Jimmy, of McLaughlin Development Group, specializes in custom homes that are primarily “start-to-finish” projects, from the preliminary design phase to the landscaping phase. The group has extensive experience completing whole houses, renovations, period restorations, kitchens, and master baths. As a general contractor, Jimmy undertakes projects that are premium, top-quality ventures. “If you want your house to look

like something out of a magazine, those are the type of projects we specialize in,” he says.

Many of Jimmy’s accomplishments as a professional come from his ability to effectively communicate with and listen to his customers, developing a critical trust that is necessary for each project to succeed. “I’m lucky that the customers I’ve had in the past have trusted me and my knowledge of what I’m doing,” he says. Because he values the input of his customers, Jimmy often encourages them to be on-site, something which other general contractors often prohibit.

When it comes to providing superior service, McLaughlin Development Group stands out in more ways than one. If a project goes over the original allowance stated in the contract, there is no charge for change orders. Also, because the group strives to complete top-quality work the first time around, customers do not have to worry about the intrusion of callback sessions. “Once we leave, it’s a

finished product,” Jimmy says.

After a project has been completed, McLaughlin Development Group customers have the benefit of knowing that, should a problem associated with the home arise within the next two to three years, they have the freedom to contact Jimmy for assistance, free of charge. The group also offers a convenient concierge service, which provides assistance with various household tasks such as changing furnace filters, light bulbs, or smoke detector batteries. In addition, customers who plan on traveling or leaving their home for an extended time period can take advantage of the concierge service by having McLaughlin associates regulate their empty home, as well as complete any landscaping needs. With the ability and the willingness to complete all of these household requirements and more, the true benefit of McLaughlin Development Group is its “one stop shop” mentality. “[Customers] are dealing with one person rather than a whole team of people,” Jimmy says.

Ensuring that completed projects are maintained is very important to McLaughlin Development Group associates. They strive to make every finished home a “maintenance-free entity” for customers during the several years that follow completion. “We don’t want to get done with a job and just leave,” Jimmy explains. “We want to stay with that customer for as long as possible because of the fact that it makes them more comfortable, and it makes us more reputable.” Not only does Jimmy make every effort to ensure the satisfaction of his customers, but he also has a genuine concern for the well-being of his finished projects. “[An] aspect of the building industry that people should understand is that I’m just taking care of my product,” he says. “My product is my name, [and] my name is the quality that I put into these houses, [something] that I want to keep for a long time.”

When it comes to visualizing the completion of a project, Jimmy has the valuable ability to see things from the customer’s point of view. Oftentimes, a general contractor and a homeowner have two entirely different perspectives on, for instance, a living room. While homeowners view a living room in terms of how it will be compatible to raising their children, contractors usually only focus on the completion of their project. “If you’re sensitive to those two points of view, then you’re ahead of the game,” Jimmy says. “A lot of general contractors are not sensitive, [and] all they care about is the bottom line: ‘How can I make money?’ For me, I would much rather take into account the emotional connections that the homeowner has to that house.”

Despite McLaughlin Development Group’s award-winning accomplishments (Jimmy’s own Libertyville home was recognized with a top architectural improvement honor), Jimmy places more emphasis on the contentment of his customers than on the procurement of awards. “Quite frankly, it’s a fairly easy business,” he says. “All you have to do is to be honest, be forthright, and develop knowledge of what the customer wants. That way, the customer is a happy camper, all the way through.”

For more information, contact McLaughlin Development Group at 847-816-9089. [F&B](#)