

YOUR FREE READER'S COMPANION

The Barndominium Builder's Pack

A companion to The Barndominium Building Bible · by Caleb Sutton

Thanks for picking up the book. This companion is the part you carry out to the site and tape to the wall of the shell: the cost worksheet you fill in before you commit a dollar, the permit checklist you work down one inspection at a time, three floor-plan concepts to steal from, a build-sequence timeline, and a one-page materials cheat sheet.

A barndominium is two projects wearing one roof — a shell you put up fast, and a home you finish inside it. Everything in this pack keeps the money decisions on paper, where they're cheap to change. — Caleb

Cost-Estimate Worksheet

Fill this in before you sign anything. Price the whole build on paper first — the cheapest mistake is the one you catch before the truck shows up. Numbers below are typical ranges for a mid-size (roughly 40 ft x 60 ft) build; yours will vary by region, finish level, and how much you do yourself.

Line item	Typical range	Your number
Land prep, grading, driveway	\$6,000 – \$20,000	\$_____
Slab / foundation	\$12,000 – \$35,000	\$_____
Post-frame shell package	\$25,000 – \$55,000	\$_____
Shell erection labor	\$8,000 – \$25,000	\$_____
Doors, windows, overhead doors	\$8,000 – \$22,000	\$_____
Insulation & vapor control	\$9,000 – \$22,000	\$_____
Electrical (rough + finish)	\$10,000 – \$25,000	\$_____
Plumbing (rough + finish)	\$9,000 – \$22,000	\$_____
Well + septic (rural)	\$12,000 – \$35,000	\$_____
HVAC	\$8,000 – \$18,000	\$_____
Interior finish (drywall, floors, trim)	\$20,000 – \$50,000	\$_____
Kitchen & baths	\$15,000 – \$45,000	\$_____
Exterior finish, porch, landscaping	\$6,000 – \$20,000	\$_____
Subtotal		\$_____
Contingency (add 13–15% of subtotal)		\$_____
TOTAL		\$_____

Two numbers that decide everything: your cost per finished square foot (total ÷ heated sq ft — most owner-builder barndos land between \$110 and \$190) and your contingency. If you don't have 13–15% set aside in cash, you don't have a budget yet — you have a wish.

Permit & Inspection Checklist

Work down this list in order. Every box is a place a build can stall for weeks if you skipped the one before it. Confirm the exact sequence with your local building department (AHJ) — they always win.

- ☐ Zoning & use (dwelling) confirmed with the AHJ, in writing
- ☐ Septic perc test / feasibility (rural)
- ☐ Well feasibility (rural)
- ☐ Engineered, stamped structural plans valid in your jurisdiction
- ☐ Building permit issued
- ☐ Electrical, plumbing & mechanical permits issued
- ☐ Footing / pre-pour inspection
- ☐ Under-slab plumbing & conduit inspection (before you pour)
- ☐ Slab inspection (if required)
- ☐ Framing inspection
- ☐ Rough electrical / plumbing / mechanical inspections
- ☐ Insulation inspection
- ☐ Final inspection & certificate of occupancy (CO)

The one that bites people: burying plumbing or conduit in the slab before it's inspected. Concrete doesn't move. Get the pre-pour sign-off in hand.

Three Sample Floor-Plan Concepts

Steal from these, then adapt them to your post grid. The trick is to lay rooms out on the post spacing so your walls land near columns, not in the middle of a clear span.

Concept A — The Shop-Home (1-story, ~1,200 sq ft living)

A 40 x 60 shell split roughly 60/40. The front 24 feet is the home: open great room / kitchen, two bedrooms, one bath, a laundry/mudroom off the entry. The back 36 feet is a heated shop with a 12-ft overhead door. One party wall (insulated, with a man-door) separates the two. Cheapest path to "done."

Concept B — The Family Barndo (1.5-story, ~2,000 sq ft living)

A 40 x 70 shell. Ground floor: open living, a big kitchen island, primary suite, guest bath, pantry, and a two-car garage bay. A loft over the bedroom wing adds two kids' rooms and a bath. Tall great-room ceiling (open to the trusses) is the "wow"; keep the bedroom wings at 8–9 ft so they're cheap to heat.

Concept C — The Rural Homestead (1-story, ~1,600 sq ft living + shop)

A 50 x 80 shell for people who actually work the land. Living wing (3 bed / 2 bath) on one gable end, a mudroom/boot-room airlock entry, a canning/pantry room, and a large unfinished shop + equipment bay on the far end you finish later as budget allows. Design the utilities so the shop can be conditioned separately.

Build-Sequence Timeline

Tape this inside the shell. Rough weeks assume decent weather and trades that show up; real builds breathe.

Phase	What happens	Rough weeks
1. Paper	Plans, permits, financing, final budget	Weeks 0–8
2. Dirt	Clear, grade, driveway, utilities to site	Weeks 6–10
3. Slab	Under-slab plumbing/conduit, vapor barrier, pour	Weeks 9–12
4. Shell	Posts, girts, trusses stood and braced	Weeks 11–14
5. Dry-in	Roof steel, wall steel, overhead + entry doors	Weeks 13–16
6. Envelope	Insulation & vapor control (the anti-rust step)	Weeks 15–18
7. Rough-in	Interior framing, electrical, plumbing, HVAC	Weeks 17–24
8. Inspect	Framing + rough MEP + insulation inspections	Weeks 23–25
9. Finish	Drywall, floors, kitchen, baths, trim, paint	Weeks 24–36
10. Move-in	Final inspection, CO, punch list	Weeks 35–38

The seam that controls your budget is between Phase 5 (dry-in) and Phase 9 (finish). The shell is fast and cheap. The home inside it is slow and where the money goes. Plan for that and it won't surprise you.

Materials Cheat Sheet

Insulation R-value target (by climate zone)

Assembly	Zones 1–3 (South)	Zones 4–5 (Mid)	Zones 6–7 (North)
Under slab (edge)	R-5	R-10	R-10
Walls	R-13 – R-19	R-19 – R-21	R-21 – R-25
Roof / ceiling	R-30	R-38	R-49

In a metal building, the vapor control matters as much as the R-value. Closed-cell spray foam on the underside of the steel is the surest way to stop the roof from raining condensation on your finished home. Never leave bare warm, humid air touching cold steel.

Post-frame quick reference

- Post spacing: typically 8 ft on-center (sometimes 10–12 ft with heavier posts/trusses). Lay your floor plan on this grid.
- Embedment / footing: posts set ~40–48 in deep on a poured footing, or bracket-mounted to piers/the slab to keep wood off the ground.
- Girts: horizontal, carry wind load and back the steel — usually 24 in on-center.
- Fastener schedule: follow the panel manufacturer's screw pattern exactly. Respect it like your roof depends on it, because it does.

The four mistakes that cost the most

1. Skipping contingency, then stalling at 80% done.
2. Burying utilities in the slab before the pre-pour inspection.
3. Insulating a metal building wrong and letting it sweat and rust from the inside.
4. Finishing walls in the middle of a clear span instead of on the post grid.

That's the pack. Print it, fill in the worksheet, and don't pour anything until the numbers add up. When you're ready, the full method — shell to finish — is in the book.

— Caleb Sutton