

Technical Brief: A Ducere Project From Planning Through Construction and Closeout

A plain-English overview of how a construction project actually runs: the six phases from first conversation to warranty in hand, what happens in each one, what the owner is asked to decide at each stage, and how Ducere keeps every phase documented, permitted, and inspected

Executive summary

Most people experience a construction project as an anxious black box: a burst of design meetings, then months of noise and invoices, then hopefully a finished building. The reality inside a well-run project is a sequence of six phases - planning, preconstruction, permitting, procurement, construction, and closeout - and the quality of the finished building is decided mostly in the first three, before anyone breaks ground. Budget is set during planning; scope, drawings, and price are locked during preconstruction; the permit defines what is legally allowed to be built. The construction phase mostly reveals how well those earlier phases were done. This brief walks through all six phases the way Ducere runs them: what happens in each phase, what the owner decides in each one, and what documentation should exist at every step. The consistent theme is that nothing important is verbal - budgets, scopes, changes, inspections, and payments are all written, filed, and traceable, because a construction project is the largest financial transaction most people will ever manage, and it deserves the same record-keeping as any other transaction of that size.

6 phases from first conversation to warranty in hand	2 yr Ducere standard warranty across all divisions	100% of permitted work performed under Ducere's own GA GC and RLQ licenses	1 system of record (BuildPass) for compliance, documents, and payments
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FIGURE 1 - THE SIX PHASES OF A DUCERE PROJECT

Each phase has to be complete before the next one can start properly - skipping one moves its cost to a later, more expensive phase.



Figure 1 - The six phases of a Ducere project. Each phase has defined deliverables and owner decisions, and each one has to be substantially complete before the next can begin.

1. Phase One - Planning: defining the project before pricing it

Planning is the phase where the project is defined well enough to be priced honestly. Ducere works with the owner to establish four things: the goal (what the finished project must do for the owner, not just look like), the budget range (what the owner can actually fund, including a contingency - Ducere recommends carrying 10-20% at this stage), the site (what the lot, zoning, and existing conditions allow), and feasibility (whether the goal, budget, and site can coexist). For renovations this phase includes an existing-conditions assessment - what is behind the walls matters as much as what

is on the drawings. The deliverable of planning is a written project definition: scope, target budget, and site constraints on one page. Projects that skip this phase do not avoid the decisions - they just make them later, under pressure, at construction prices.

2. Phase Two - Preconstruction: drawings, scope, and the real price

Preconstruction converts the project definition into buildable documents and a real number. The core activities: retaining design professionals as needed (architect, structural engineer, MEP - Georgia requires engineering on structural elements, and walls over certain heights require professional design), developing the scope of work that each trade will be responsible for, and estimating from actual drawings rather than hope. Ducere's rule from its own estimating standards: an estimate is a range until the drawings are complete, and a fixed price is only as good as the documents behind it. This phase also produces the contract itself - which Ducere treats as a scope document, not a formality. The owner decisions in preconstruction are the big ones: final design, final budget, and contract execution. Money spent here - on complete drawings and a clear scope - is the cheapest money in the entire project, because every ambiguity left in the drawings becomes a change order in the field.

3. Phase Three - Permitting: what the law allows to be built

The permit phase submits the construction documents to the authority having jurisdiction (the city or county building department) and answers its questions until the permit is issued. The permit is not a formality - it is the government's definition of what may legally be built, and construction that deviates from it must be corrected or re-approved. In Georgia, residential and commercial permits are issued to licensed contractors, and every Ducere permit is pulled under the company's own licenses (GA GC GCCO006711 and GA RLQ RLQQA005251), which places personal statutory responsibility on Ducere's qualifying agent - a responsibility that cannot be delegated to a subcontractor. The practical discipline in this phase: build what was submitted, submit what will be built, and never let field changes outrun the approved drawings. Ducere's rule is that unpermitted work or work outside the permit scope is a stop-work condition, without exception.

4. Phase Four - Procurement: buying the project twice, on purpose

Procurement is where the project is bought competitively and the compliance file is built. Each trade scope is bid to multiple qualified subcontractors, prices are compared scope-line-by-scope-line (not just totaled), and awards go to the subcontractor whose number is both competitive and real - Ducere's field experience is that a suspiciously low bid is a change-order plan, not a bargain. Just as important as price is compliance: before any subcontractor mobilizes, Ducere requires an executed agreement, an active W-9, current insurance certificates with Ducere named as additional insured, and trade licensure where the work requires it - all filed on the vendor's record in Ducere's compliance system (BuildPass), not in a project folder where it cannot be found later. Payment releases follow the same logic: no compliance file, no payment. This phase is invisible to most owners and is one of the main reasons to hire a GC at all - the owner is buying a vetted, insured, licensed supply chain, not just a schedule.

5. Phase Five - Construction: the managed build

Construction is the phase everyone pictures, run on three disciplines. **Schedule:** a published sequence with milestones, updated as reality asserts itself - Ducere treats the schedule as a communication document, so the owner always knows what is happening next and why. **Quality assurance:** Ducere's own QA inspections at each milestone (before drywall closes walls, before concrete is covered, before insulation buries the envelope), coordinated with the county inspector's code inspections - the two are not the same thing, and a passed county inspection means the work meets code minimums, not that it is finished well. **Documentation:** daily logs, photo and video capture of concealed work before it is

covered, inspection records, and written change orders - every change priced and signed before the work proceeds, never after. The owner decisions in construction are selections (fixtures, finishes) delivered on time, and change-order approvals. The phase deliverable is a substantially complete building with a documented trail from permit to paint.

6. Phase Six - Closeout: finishing the project twice - once physically, once legally

Closeout is the most skipped phase in construction and the one that protects the owner longest. Physically, closeout is the punch list: a joint walk-through, a written list of every incomplete or unsatisfactory item, and each item corrected and re-inspected. Legally, closeout is the file: final lien releases from every subcontractor and supplier (the only real protection that the person who built the project has been paid), final inspections and the certificate of occupancy or completion, as-built documentation and warranty information for the systems installed, and Ducere's standard two-year warranty in writing. Final payment is released when the file is complete - not before. Ducere's position is that a project is not finished when the contractor leaves; it is finished when the owner holds a complete closeout package and an enforceable warranty.

WHY "EVERYTHING WRITTEN" IS THE WHOLE SYSTEM

Every phase above ends in a document for a reason. A written project definition keeps the budget honest. Complete drawings keep the price fixed. The permit keeps the work legal. The compliance file keeps the subcontractors insured and paid - which keeps liens off the property. Change orders keep surprises priced before they are built. The closeout package keeps the warranty enforceable. An owner evaluating any contractor, Ducere included, should ask one question in every phase: "show me the document." A contractor who cannot produce the documents is telling you something.

7. Quick reference: frequently asked questions

QUESTION	ANSWER
How long does each phase take?	It scales with the project. On a typical renovation: planning and preconstruction together often take as long as construction itself - weeks to a few months for drawings, estimating, and permitting. Owners who compress the early phases almost always pay the difference back in change orders.
What do I (the owner) actually have to do?	Four things, on time: set the budget honestly during planning, make selections and decisions during preconstruction and construction when asked, approve change orders in writing, and attend the milestone walks. A GC can manage everything else except an owner who will not decide.
What is a change order and why is it in writing?	A change order is the contract-amendment mechanism for anything that differs from the approved scope - added work, site conditions the drawings could not show, or owner-requested changes. It is in writing with a price before the work proceeds so that both parties agree on cost before it is incurred, not after.
Why does the permit matter if the work is good?	The permit is the legal definition of allowed construction. Unpermitted work - even good work - can block a sale, void insurance coverage, and require removal. Every Ducere permit is pulled under Ducere's own GA GC and RLQ licenses.
What protects me from subcontractor liens?	The closeout process: conditional lien releases with each payment and final, unconditional releases from every subcontractor and supplier before final payment. Ducere's payment gate releases nothing without an active compliance file on record.
What warranty do I get?	Ducere's standard warranty is two years across all divisions, delivered in writing at closeout alongside manufacturers' warranties for installed systems. Warranty enforceability is one reason closeout documentation is not optional.

QUESTION	ANSWER
What is BuildPass?	Ducere's operating system of record: subcontractor compliance files, insurance and W-9 tracking, project documents, and payment gates live there. It is how Ducere can answer "show me the document" for any subcontractor on any project.

References: Georgia licensing law (O.C.G.A. Ch. 43-14, residential and general contracting); Georgia State Amendments to the International Residential Code and International Building Code (permit, inspection, and certificate-of-occupancy provisions); Ducere Construction Services internal standards: subcontractor onboarding and compliance program (BuildPass system of record), QA inspection protocol, and two-year standard warranty. General phase structure reflects standard construction-management practice. Informational only - every project is governed by its own contract documents and the requirements of its local jurisdiction.