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Does Brick Size Matter?

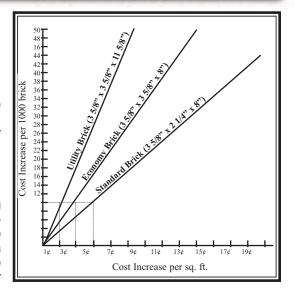
Architectural romantics might suppose that the size of brick selected doesn't matter, but I don't believe it when it comes to the cost of construction. Your masonry costs are not determined just by "brick", but by the size, shape and style of the brick you choose for your building or renovation and the labor involved in laying brick.

Think in terms of Cost Per Square Foot

This is an example of why you should not use the method of price per thousand brick as a determining factor in the selection of your brick. Consider the use of price per square foot and not the price per thousand. For a \$10 difference in the cost per thousand of a utility size brick the corresponding cost increase per square foot is approximately 3ϕ per square foot. For a \$10 difference in the cost per thousand for a standard size brick the price increase per square foot would be about 7ϕ per square foot. The purpose of this example is to show the architect, and the owner of the structure, to think in terms of cost per square foot, a more familiar unit to work with than cost per thousand brick.

Forget the Carpet, Upgrade your Brick!

An owner or architect is willing to spend many dollars per square foot for interior carpeting and floor furnishings which may only serve the client 10 years. But when it comes to the decision of what exterior facade that the owner will be living with for the life of the structure, the same care used in the selection of interior carpet and paint colors should extend to the brick selection process with appropriate costs properly analyzed.



Example

Your Builder only allows you a brick allowance of \$385/1000 for the brick on your house. The brick your love costs \$50 more per 1000 brick or \$435/1000. That translates to an increased cost per square foot of brick by $$0.35/ft^2 given the brick is the same size, the labor costs remain equal.

Beyond cost per thousand

The practice of using only dollar value allowances for brick in construction contracts is not recommended. If, however the allowance procedure is used, the amount should be determined based upon current prices in the contract area for similar products. The allowance should also clearly state dimensions and grade or specification of the unit to be provided. The allowance should apply only to the size unit selected and not involve shaped or other special ordered sizes.

What about the labor cost?

In brick masonry work, labor constitutes approximately 60% of the total price. If you can reduce the labor requirements per square foot, you decrease the masonry contract price. If architecturally acceptable, and if the brick coursing, the window and door openings, and any other architectural details are sized properly, it may behoove the owner and the architect to select a larger size brick for that Particular project.

BRICK UNIT	SIZE (BDxHxL)	UNITS PER SQ. FOOT OF WALL (Including 3/8" joints)	
Standard	3 5/8" x 2 1/4" x 8	6.55	
Modular	3 5/8" x 2 1/4" x 7 5/8"	6.86	
Jumbo	3 5/8" x 2 3/4" x 8"	5.50	
King	3 5/8" x 2 3/4" x 9 5/8"	4.61	
Roman	3 5/8" x 1 5/8" x 11 5/8"	6.00	
Norman	3 5/8" x 2 1/4" x 11 5/8"	4.57	
Jumbo Norman	3 5/8" x 2 3/4" x 11 5/8"	3.84	
Economy	3 5/8" x 3 5/8" x 8"	4.30	
Utility	3 5/8" x 3 5/8" x 11 5/8"	3.00	

NOTE: Remember, order your brick by actual dimensions only - a brick manufacturers idea of a king size brick may not be your idea of a king size brick!

Assume you are building a large masonry structure and have obtained prices for different sizes of brick and have also obtained very different masonry prices based on different sizes of brick to be used. The table below indicates part of the reason for price differences

Brick Unit	\$/1000(7/04)	$(\$/unit) (units/ft^2) = \$/ft^2)$	Bricklayer motions/ft ²	% more labor than utility
Modular	\$380	(.38) (6.86) = \$2.60	6.86	128%
Engineer	\$460	(.46) (5.625) = \$2.58	5.52	88%
King	\$450	(.45) (4.61) = \$2.07	4.61	54%
Utility	\$900	(.90) (3.00) = \$2.70	3.00	-