

S T E V E N
D O N A
ARCHITECTURE & PLANNING

Initial Meeting

For our initial meeting you should have outlined a number of objectives.

First and foremost, we need to clearly define the goals of the project.

This may take the form of a new kitchen or bathroom that is carefully tailored to the way that you live or it may be an entirely new home. Either way, the objective shouldn't be thought of as "add a new 11'x12' bedroom" but it *could* be "add a new bedroom that will be sized according to our needs and desires." This allows us as architects to offer ideas and concepts that are beyond the two-dimensional image of a room and take into account details such as:

Natural lighting

View inside and outside the home

Circulation within the home

Furniture layout,

The style of the home

Your entertaining patterns (formal or informal etc.)

Physical attributes of the site and any existing structures on the site

Ceiling height and shape

Finishes and moldings

Kitchen layout, cabinets and appliances



What to bring to your first meeting

As you can see, the list can often involve quite a range of items. You can establish these goals in a number of ways:

Often a file folder full of magazine clippings is a helpful way to start our discussion about a particular style or concept or even photo of a special piece of furniture or finish. Other useful items are property surveys including topography (site contours if the site is not flat.) It is also helpful to have some idea of the important spaces and uses that you want to have like the number of bedrooms, but it is not important to have a defined floor plan for the home. In addition we need to talk about how you intend to use your home. Do you entertain formally or informally? How large of a gathering do you anticipate when you entertain? It is important to recognize that much of the entertaining that we do is **not** planned, it can be a friend, neighbor or relative that just drops by or you invite over after some other function. This spontaneous entertaining is often very important but not part of a clients formal plan when we sit down and begin talking about the project.

As we begin designing your project it is also important to understand that the architect often has a series of conflicting building requirements that can govern the design processes, these potential restrictions are:

Zoning (*this is how much building city or county will allow us to build on your property, and what are your building setbacks and maximum heights.*)

Structural concerns (*the building must be designed to withstand gravity, wind and seismic loads*)

Building Codes: (*each municipality has adopted some form of building codes that specify how the building can be built*)

Washington State Energy Code: (*yes the state also regulates energy conservation and we will be required to show compliance with this code.*)

There are often neighborhood covenants or easements *that potentially restrict the building design.*



In addition we want to talk about or establish an overall budget for the project and begin to talk about overall timing for construction.

It is important to openly discuss budget goals early because the architect can vary both the scope of the project or overall level of detail or finish of the project to bring the project close to your budget goals. The actual cost of construction will vary depending upon current cost of materials and other market conditions such as the cost of labor. Lumber prices vary significantly from month to month but the cost of paint doesn't change as often. Market conditions are also tied to how busy the local contractors and sub-contractors are at the time of construction as their price will vary depending on how "hungry" they are for work.

A typical design and construction scenario...

Establishing the Program

First we have an initial meeting to discuss the *goals and scope of the project* as outlined above. From this meeting you and or the architect develops a **Program**. This **Program** is a written set of goals for the project. We are also often asked to visit a potential building site with a client to discuss the possible advantages or problems with a specific building lot before an offer is made on the property. If this is a remodel project we will now measure the home and prepare as-built drawings of the existing residence.



Conceptual Design

After this meeting or series of meetings, we will design the *conceptual design*. The conceptual design is just like it sounds, it is in essence the concept of what we are going to build. Our office will prepare scaled floor plans, an elevation of the project and a conceptual model of the home and site as well as any drawings necessary to convey the intent or special features of the design. The conceptual model is an important part of the design presentation. It allows you to better visualize the layering and massing of the design in a simple and easy to understand format. The conceptual design will have enough detail to allow us to critically analyze and discuss the floor plans and elevation we will be able to discuss simple furniture layout and circulation throughout the home. We may also need to fine-tune or modify the plans based upon your input and review.

Design Development

The next phase of the project is called ***Design Development***. This is where we refine the conceptual design in response to your conceptual design comments. We may also use this phase to further develop a concept that was started in the Conceptual Design phase, or we may incorporate new ideas or refinements as the design matures. We often find that you have important input at this stage.



Permit Drawings

Next we begin preparing the *Building Permit Drawings*. This is where we prepare all of the “nuts and bolts” drawings that are necessary to apply for a building permit. These drawings will vary in scope depending upon the size or complexity of the project. We often use the services of a Certified Kitchen Designer and an Interior Designer to help with the myriad of questions and options relating to finishes and cabinets and appliances. Many clients find this service very helpful as the number of choices and decisions that have to be made can be overwhelming. We will also send our drawings to a Structural Engineer so the beams and shear walls can be calculated and specified for the project. All of this will be used to assemble a package for the contractor that will become a written and pictorial part of your contract with the building contractor.

These drawings will also be used for your building permit application. The permit review time will vary depending upon the municipality and the overall size of the project. (and the mood of the plan reviewer) as well as the number of applications in the hopper before us.

During this time we will often begin getting final numbers back from the contractor. The contractors price may be a competitive bid or more often, a negotiated bid method (often called “cost plus”) is used for choosing the contractor. We can suggest contractors that we have used on previous projects or you may suggest a contractor of your own that you prefer to build your project. All of these are critical decisions, we will want to discuss these issues in detail.



Construction Administration

After the building permit is issued and the contract is signed with the contractor we will begin the fun part: the *Construction Administration Phase*.

Our involvement with this phase will vary quite a bit depending on the complexity of the project and the experience of the contractor. Our job site reviews often spots problems early on in the process and saves everyone, including the contractor, a lot of grief. We go to great lengths to prepare accurate and clear plans for construction but there are always small changes or omissions that are important to the overall project but are often not obvious in the framing stage. Regularly scheduled job site meetings also allow a time for the Contractor and the owner to ask questions and to discuss any proposed changes to the design. It is often quite surprising for the client when they propose a small change, how it can dramatically affect the end result of the project. These meetings also give us a chance to review the quality of construction as well as the schedule of construction. It also gives the client a chance to discuss the project with the architect.

The Finishing Touches

As the project nears completion, the architect will help tie up any loose ends with a punch list for the contractor. This is helpful as it provides a written list of items that need to be completed before the contractor can receive their final payment. In addition, we will often schedule a final walk through with the contractor 30 days after the project is complete to make sure everything is perfect.

