



HOME ARCHITECTS ®

HOME PROJECT PLANNING GUIDE

Home Project Planning Guide

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First online publishing February 2014 from the USA, on the HOME ARCHITECTS ® website.

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Home Project Planning Guide

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Home Project Planning Guide

Preface

This e-book is based on mainly planning for a house. Whether for a new home for your family or a renovation; the intention is to help provide you with some considerations and a checklist for items to be addressed.

I am Rand Soellner, ArCH, NCARB, LHI, M.A. Arch, Senior Staff Architect with the HOME ARCHITECTS ®. I have been designing homes for over 40 years. I have been a licensed Architect since 1982 and am licensed in multiple states throughout the USA, and have been involved in the planning, design and/or construction of over \$3 billion worth of projects (of all types). In other words, I have a good grasp of what needs to happen to properly plan a residential project. I am going to provide you with the benefit of my experience and make you aware of several things that may end up being important for your project. You may even save some money. You certainly should be happier with the results of your project.

Now let's focus on YOU. This is about what you want. However, you as the Client and Owner of the to-be-designed house needs to make sure that you allow your Architect to do his or her job and let them design it for you. If you are the sort of person that prefers, instead to be a mass-consumer goods type of person that wants to spend endless hours poring over countless online existing "plans" and you think that somehow your answer is in those, you are headed in the wrong direction and are working against yourself. Why? Because NONE of those existing online "plans" was created specifically for you, your lifestyle, or for your land with your views and environmental features. You need to stop trying to short circuit the process and let the experts you hire (such as your Architect) do their jobs on your behalf.

And how do you know that your Architect will do it properly? Well, most competent Architects will begin by Programming your proposed house. Programming is you mainly talking and your Architect listening to what your desired lifestyle is/will be in the proposed new house, along with analyzing your property. That's the basis of a firm foundation for a result that incorporates what you need and want with what your land offers. But this book isn't really about the design process. It's about what YOU should/can be doing to provide good information to your Architect so that they have accurate information from you so that they can do their job well. The design of a home is one of the most complex architectural tasks an Architect can undertake. Let the professional licensed Architect do it for you.

And you know what? If you don't want to do anything suggested in this book, your Architect will do it all for you. No problem. But if you are the sort of person that prefers to be busy doing something to get ready for events in your life, then this book is for you.

Okay, so what sort of information can you think about, then list prior to your Architect starting? What should you know about yourself before proceeding with the project? That's what this book is all about. Let's get started.

Home Project Planning Guide

1

GETTING READY : COMPUTER

Turn on your computer.

Turn on your computer and call up either *MS Word* or *MS Excel*. Either one of those programs should work well to document your initial information. You are simply providing preliminary information to assist your Architect and get things started on the right track. Some of these items may seem very routine, but they are all necessary.

2

PERSONAL CONTACT INFORMATION

List all your contact information.

NAMES

Type your full name (first and last) along with the name of your spouse and any children or other relatives or other people that may be living in the to-be-designed house. Indicate your ages.

PHONE NUMBERS

Type your home and cell phone numbers, identifying whose phone is whose.

EMAIL ADDRESSES

Type your email addresses (one for each spouse).

ADDRESS(es) of PRESENT HOME/MAILING

Type your present mailing address (for you and your spouse) and physical address for US Mail and FedEx/UPS. This will facilitate communications and deliveries between you and your Architect.

3

PROJECT PROPERTY INFORMATION

Provide location data of your land.

ADDRESS OF PROPERTY FOR THE PROJECT

Type the 911 address of the project land, if you have that information. This may not be determined until the home is built and the local County determines the address. However, if you cannot obtain the final address, provide the Subdivision name and lot number and a PDF image of the lot within the subdivision site plan, illustrating where it is and the names of the surrounding roads/streets and highways.

NEAREST LARGE AND MINOR INTERSECTIONS

Type the names of the streets at the nearest intersection closest to the land. Type the nearest major highway intersection.

COUNTY, CITY, TOWN, STATE

Type the name of the County, City or Town or Village and State where the land is located.

DIGITAL LATITUDE & LONGITUDE

Get on Google Earth and find your land. Locate the exact place where you enter the land from the nearest roadway. Look in the lower right hand corner and type the coordinates for the Latitude and Longitude exactly as you see them. Do NOT use the minutes (') and seconds (") format. Record it all in digital format (35.667891*, -83.567390*). Do a screen capture (Cntrl-Alt-PrntScrn), then paste that image onto your file page you are typing. This image will help the Architect and others locate your land in the future.

PROPERTY BOUNDARY

Try to find some means of depicting the boundary of your land. There are some crude tools on Google Earth to help you with this. Or get on the phone or Skype and have your Architect draw this for you, with you guiding them. They have no way of knowing where your property lines are without your guidance or a survey.

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SURVEY OF YOUR PROPERTY

A Survey is necessary.

You absolutely, positively will need a land survey. You may think that because you own 5, 10 or 100 acres or more that your improvements will be located nowhere near your property lines, so there is no need for a Survey. Nothing could be further from the truth. Read this article: <http://www.homearchitects.com/why-you-need-a-survey>

What you will discover is that there are building setbacks from septic fields, septic repair field reserve areas, water wells, easements, road ROW (Right Of Way), along with underground and overhead power lines, phone lines, sewage and water pipes, ponds, rivers, streams, lakes and other bodies of water, whose edge and flood height need to be shown on surveys (typically required by local ordinance). Also, you need to have topography, which can consist of many different features, but often mainly is considered as the land contours, so that your Architect can design the heights of your home's floor levels, driveways and other features so that they don't flood or become damaged by rainwater moving over the final grades on the ground. The only way to accurately accomplish this is with a topographic survey. You may have certain trees that you regard fondly and want to preserve, or your HOA (HomeOwner's Association, if there is

one) may require you to document trees on a survey prior to removing. You should not commission a Surveyor alone. You should suggest perhaps the names, phone numbers and emails of 3 local Surveyors to your Architect, who will then contact them and provide each of them with the Architect's List of Survey Requirements. This list of Survey requirements from the Architect will insure that the Surveyors understand the scope of their work, prior to quoting a price to you and prior to them appearing on your land to perform the work.

And no Architect should begin official work on a project without having a Survey. The Survey needs to be electronic, probably in an AutoCad format, which is what most of the world uses for design and engineering software. Your Surveyor should only provide their survey electronically, in compliance with the Architects List of Survey Requirements. Paper is a waste of time. Your Architect will draw on top of the electronic survey on his/her computer software. Your local County or City will require that you submit a Site Plan for your building permit. Your Architect uses the Surveyor's Survey as the Base Map for his Site Plan. The Survey illustrates what you have existing. The Site Plan indicates what improvements are being made to the Site.

The Survey may be obtained after your Architect walks your property with you, if there isn't enough time for the Survey to be created before then. Make sure you allow your Architect to manage the Survey acquisition so you won't have to pay your Surveyor to return to your land to obtain information that your Architect requests in his List of Survey Requirement.

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YOUR LIFESTYLE

The new home should be based on YOUR desired Lifestyle and property characteristics.

This is the type of life and activities you would like to be able to engage in and around your new home. Do not allow your existing lifestyle to damage what you want it to become. In other words, if your present circumstances are inhibiting what you want to do, DREAM NOW of the way you would like things to be for you in the new house.

HOBBIES: List any hobbies that you have or that you want to have in or around the new home: Astronomy (I am designing a house for a client who wants to enjoy astronomy of planets in our solar system, for instance), sewing, stained glass, wood working, ceramics (kilns and other apparatus), epicurean cooking, exercise (such as in home gym equipment) and the like. And beside each of these activities, list equipment that you feel might help you enjoy them, including makes and model numbers and obtain electronic manufacturer's cut sheets of them so that your Architect can help program and plan for them on or around your proposed home.

Don't forget the outside. You may want walking or jogging trails, right on your land. You may want a quiet special place on your land for you to engage in spiritual contemplation, or a quiet room with a great view in which to write books or poetry. It's really up to you. What do you want to do in this house and around it, on your land? Think about it and list the things that you KNOW you want to do. Perhaps you do them now, but feel you could do them better in a newly built environment, specially tuned to suit your needs. That's part of the joy of having a new home designed to meet your desired Lifestyle.

MAINTENANCE: Part of your desired Lifestyle may also involve minimum maintenance of the proposed house and grounds. Say so in your desired Lifestyle list.

PRIVACY: you should indicate if you wish to be able to see and talk to other people passing by your property/house, or if you would rather prefer total privacy.

ACOUSTICS: you only want to hear the sounds you make or you would like to hear the sounds of nearby vehicles and people.

VIEWS: entirely private of nature, or being able to see what neighbors are doing.

CASUAL OR FORMAL LIFESTYLE?

DO YOU ENTERTAIN OFTEN?

WOULD YOU LIKE YOUR HOUSE TO BECOME THE CENTER OF YOUR EXTENDED FAMILY'S HOLIDAYS?

OTHER considerations only you can think of that are important to you:_____.

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ROOMS/SPACES DESIRED

List the rooms and spaces you would like.

List what rooms and spaces you believe you want in your new home. Here is an example list:

Garage: 3 car, but for only 2 vehicles. The last bay will be for working on projects and storing things.

Front Porch: mainly a covered entrance for arriving guests, however, I might like to enjoy sitting there once in a while. Perhaps room for 2 to 4 rocking chairs or a bench. I would prefer that the porch be a little elevated from the driveway.

Foyer: a place to receive guests. A nearby coat closet would be nice and functional. I would prefer to have either a single wide entrance door of 42" width x 8' height, or a pair of 36" wide x 8' tall entry doors. Would prefer entry doors to be solid wood with some sort of a hinged speak-easy panel (covered with security bars) that allows me to see, communicate with people on the Front Porch without actually opening the door(s).

Kitchen: large, with at least 4'-6" to 5'+/- between counters.

48" wide range/double oven.

Two 36" wide stainless steel refrigerator/freezers.

Farmhouse double basin sink with window looking outside.

Large island to seat up to 6 people on guest side. Double basin sink on island.

Most of kitchen open to Great Room – Dining- Living area.

All sinks to have a nearby dishwasher and recycling/trash receptacles behind lower cabinet doors.

Built-in spice racks (exposed) on either side of main range, built into cabinetry.

Task lighting under upper cabinets.

Painted cabinet faces on island.

Stained cabinet faces on remainder of kitchen.

Granite counters.

Some sort of special feature over and to sides of cooking range.

Vertical stack of MW oven, waist-high wall oven, warming drawer, steaming oven.

More... You decide...

Pantry: walk-in pantry room next to Kitchen that also may be the main Laundry room, however, the Architect may be able to have alternative schemes for the Laundry that result in more efficiency, such as proximity to the Master Suite.

On and On. . . Your Architect will take this list and compare it with your land and your other comments and may possibly suggest additions or amendments based on his perceptions of your desired Lifestyle, for your consideration. But this is an excellent starting point.

Note: if this is too technical for you, your Architect can do this for you.

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SPACIAL ADJACENCIES

What rooms & spaces should be next to each other?

You may want to give some consideration as to what spaces and features you have listed above, that you would like to have next to what other spaces. Here's a few ideas to get things going:

Garage next to Kitchen.

Foyer next to Front Porch.

Dining and Hearth Room (Living Room) next to Kitchen and next to Rear Porch.

Master Bedroom next to Rear Porch.

Master Bedroom next to Master Bathroom.

You may not have the desire to go through much of this. It is easy for Architects; not so easy for others to do. Your Architect can handle this for you and will. However, if you have particular adjacencies that are important for you, you may want to at least list those.

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COLORS/TEXTURES

Samples can help you with this.

Tear off samples of colors and textures of materials you like and put them into a folder. These may or may not assist the final color selections, based on how the project takes shape.

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DO NOT TEAR OUT LITTLE “PLANS” YOU SEE IN MAGAZINES AND SAVE THEM

Your time is worth more than this.

See the Preface to this book. This is a waste of your good time. You are special. You are unique. Your land is unique. Please allow your Architect to arrange your desired spaces in such a way that is responsive to your desired Lifestyle and to your land and its topography and views. Giving your Architect a bunch of little plans or emailing him plans that you see on the Internet is like someone sending their doctor WebMD procedures for their upcoming heart surgery. Let the professionals do their job on your behalf. This books lists everything you want to think about and share with your Architect. Mainly it consists of what makes you special, your project functional, and your dream home objectives.

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THE RIGHT ARCHITECT CAN MAKE YOUR HOUSE LOOK LIKE ANYTHING

Trust them.

A really good Architect can make any floor plan have elevations that look like any particular style you might enjoy. You do not have to have a particular floor plan in order to have a particular “Look” or style. Let your Architect do his/her job for you. You probably selected your Architect because you liked the way his or her designs looked.

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READ “HOW TO HIRE AN ARCHITECT” by HOME ARCHITECTS ®

That book tells you how to do this.

This will help you find the right Architect for your project. Here's where you can find this online book:

<http://www.homearchitects.com/how-to-hire-an-architect>

Your body counts.

For you and your spouse and for anyone else that will be living in the house for an extended period of time:

Take a measuring tape and measure:

Height of the back of your lower leg when you are in a sitting position. This should be somewhere around 18".

Height above the floor of the center of your eye level from both a standing a sitting position.

Width of your shoulders (probably 16" to 20" unless you are a pro league linebacker).

Record your weight.

Indicate your height when standing and sitting (the floor to the top of your head).

Indicate the height of your comfortable front reach in terms of height (from the floor) and length (from your main body/chest).

Record any mobility issues you or others in your family might have, or that may affect certain visitors, like aged parents. Some Architects (like the HOME ARCHITECTS ®) design for aging in place and all of their projects are Accessible Friendly.

Take a full body photograph of you and your significant other/family and attach to the file as a JPEG, or paste directly onto your list.

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VEHICLES

Describe your vehicles.

Indicate the make, model and year of the vehicles that you intend to park in any planned-for garage, porte-cochere, driveway or parking area. Do not assume that your Architect understands that you drive a real military Humvee unless you tell him, in writing.

Indicate the length, width and height of each of these vehicles. This will impact the width, height and length of your garage. For instance: most “builder” garages are often 20’ square. Since a Ford F-150 crew cab is 20’ long, that’s not going to fit, if that’s what you want to park there. Your Architect will size your Garage to fit what’s going into it, if you provide that information. Make sure you note any special lighting you may have above the vehicle roof, if any, as that will add to your required clearance.

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BEST VIEW DIRECTIONS

Indicate your views.

If you are intimately familiar with your property and if you KNOW what you want to be looking at from your proposed new house, the next time you are there, take a compass with you and accurately record the best view directions and note them in your Planning Checklist under this item. Also, record the compass directions of anything you do NOT want to be looking at, such as power lines, roads, neighboring houses and other features.

Note: record the compass directions twice:

First as a bearing: 0* to 360*, with North as 0*

Second: ____* West (or East or South or North) of South or North (or other cardinal direction). This helps to verify the direction.

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CLOTHING & STORAGE

List your LF.

List the LF (Linear Footage) of the amount of clothing you would like to store in each of your various closets. Note that your Architect will likely double or triple your storage capacity through his intelligent use of multiple levels of storage rods and shelves, depending on the available heights in your proposed house. So: just list the Length (LF) of room you want for hanging clothes rods and for shelving length of particular depths.

List the LF of storage for other items you may wish to provide for in the house. Note the purpose.

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HEALTH

List your health issues.

List any health problems. For instance, if you have COPD (Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease), or asthma, your Architect needs to be especially careful of the chemical makeup of the items of the project that could have off-gassing that could impact these illnesses. Do not entrust this to your Builder.

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MATERIAL PREFERENCES

List your preferences.

Much of this is going to be driven by cost, but go ahead and list the building materials that you like and would possibly enjoy seeing on or in your home. Be realistic. If you are trying to only spend \$100/SF on your house, you are probably not going to have any stonework, which is heavy, expensive and labor intensive. The more money you have to spend, the more flexible your material choices become. But no Contractor is going to make your house appear like a castle if you do not have a budget to support that. If you don't have any idea of what it costs to build a quality home, do some research online and talk to some other people who have recently had nice homes built and ask them what they spent. You will always be surprised at how much more things cost than you expected.

Construction costs vary.

This can and does vary significantly across the USA and also for the size, type, level of detail, topography and location/remoteness of your property.

When you buy land in the middle of nowhere, you are likely going to pay more for your construction, because the Contractors are going to have to drive farther and longer to get there and to return home each day. Most home projects have over 50 subcontracting companies involved and likely over 150 people that help to physically build the house and grounds, so just multiply your drive from the nearest metro area x 150 x perhaps 1/3 of your construction length in days to get an understanding of the impact your location will have on the cost to build your home. HOME ARCHITECTS® have seen home construction costs vary from as little as \$65/HSF (Heated Square Feet) in certain parts of Arkansas for builder's low end tract housing to over \$1,000/HSF for fancy Rocky Mountain ski-homes on the sides of cliffs. Most of America lies somewhere in between these extremes, depending on your location, resources available, complexity and site characteristics. \$100/HSF is considered difficult to achieve for anything other than a carpet and painted drywall approach with ultra-simplicity and few windows. \$150/HSF may be the middle ground, and \$200+/HSF for nicer homes with some level of interest and nicer finishes, inside and out. Do not assume that these numbers necessarily apply in your area. That needs to be determined.

And this is the most important thing to remember about the cost of your house:

Who controls the cost most?

YOU.

And your chosen General Contractor.

What do we mean by “YOU?” Well, you are the one that wanted all that size (square footage), aren't you? And you wanted all that stone, and granite counters, and upper end appliances, and upgraded roofing and on and on. And you are the one who decided on where to build it: you selected the land and all that comes with it, including perhaps steep slopes? When you look in the mirror, you are looking at the main person who determines your construction cost. There are no Contractors who give away basements (which is a common myth) or extra square footage, or more glass area for nothing. Don't kid yourself.

And what do we mean by “your chosen General Contractor?” He's the guy or gal that is signing their name in blood to their agreement with you to build your house for either a specific fixed dollar amount, or for a fee percentage. How much they want to charge you can be governed by many factors:

- a) their overhead.
- b) their perceptions of how much you want them to do the job (beware of making them think they've got the job).
- c) how much competition there is around them.
- d) debt they owe or other purchases they would like to make, using your job as the profit center.
- e) increases in the cost of materials and labor.
- e) other items.

Do you or the Architect control any of those? No.

So when you think about your budget: just because you want to build it for a certain dollar amount, or dollars/SF, does not necessarily make that happen. You may have been unrealistic in your initial goals. Many people these days budget between \$150/HSF to \$250/HSF. Reality often lies somewhere between those amounts, depending on particulars. And HSF (Heated Square Feet) may or may not include the garage, decks, porches and other items. Sometimes it does. Much depends on the economy and what you want.

Do the math. Most people do not. It is really easy. Here's an example: say you want a 2,500 HSF house and want things to be fairly modest and simple and not have a garage, but you do want a small front porch and medium rear porch. Okay, let's try \$165/HSF x 2,500. That = \$412,500. If it actually costs \$180/HSF, then that would = \$450,000. And if it costs \$200/HSF (because you have wood floors and ceilings and several other nice features), that would = \$500,000. Your home could be more or less, depending on what you want to have and how much you are willing to pay.

At this point we would like to share with you a peculiarity of psychology of the home buying, home-building public. It is not well known, but nonetheless it exists. We call it: "I believe I am going to get the lowest prices in the history of the Universe to build my house and get everything I want and even more for less" syndrome. Not very catchy, but that does describe it accurately. EVERYONE seems to believe this, at least before they receive the actual price from the Contractor. Perhaps if people faced the reality of what their homes were actually going to cost them in the end, they would not venture forth to do them. Perhaps they engage in this self-delusion in order to allow themselves to proceed. Therefore: always have more money on hand to build your house than you think it will cost. In the end, it may very likely cost you 10%, 25%, 50% or 100%+ more than you first imagined.

One of the main reasons for budget overruns: you want what you want and you are going to do whatever you have to do to get it. Which includes fooling yourself and not believing more experienced people like Contractors and Architects. If you really want to contain your costs, listen carefully to your Architect. He/she will never guarantee you what your project might cost (because no one is going to take that liability from your shoulders for underwriting what your dreams may cost). However, they can certainly share with you that your house is getting too large for what

you wanted to spend, that certain materials are too expensive, or that certain locations (like steep land) will greatly increase your costs.

Another main reason for cost overruns: someone you know said that their builder built a house similar to what you want for \$75/SF. So you kid yourself that this will happen for you and you proceed, including anything and everything you could ever want, even though experienced people, like your Architect and others warn you that what you are doing will greatly increase your cost of building. You ignore these learned people and plunge ahead. Then, one day, when the designing is done and you are getting hard prices that are going to be fixed on a contract with a Builder, suddenly the price has doubled.

What could have happened? Well, what happened is: that Builder finally understood the steepness of your site (rather than the flat one where he built a house for less) and he finally reviewed all the drawings and specifications and finally understands the detailed nature of what you truly want. You want heart pine floors (as opposed to the white pine he had in the other, cheaper house). You want granite counters (not the plastic laminate he used in the cheap house). You want thousands of square feet of stone cladding on your walls (not the pine he used on the cheaper house). You want a 4 car garage (not zero garage in the cheap house). It all adds up. It comes down to what you want and there is a day of reckoning where the person to build it will in fact charge you what it will cost + a profit + overhead number. There is no amount of negotiating that will make an out of work Contractor build your house for less than it will cost him to build it. He'd be better off fishing. At least he catches something to eat.

What to do to correct this situation: LISTEN to your Architect. He/she will share with you when you are requesting things that appear to be straining your budget. This is sensitive territory for an Architect. They want you happy. They don't want to disappoint you. However, they don't want to

be blamed that your project costs more than you want to pay for it, either. So, the Architect isn't likely going to harp on this subject, beyond a simple comment once in a while. Listen to those and heed them.

How Your Architect Can Help you Control Costs

This is really getting into architectural document production techniques, which firms like HOME ARCHITECTS ® have mastered, over decades of experience on billions of dollars' worth of design, planning and construction. And this really has no place in this particular book, which is focused on the things YOU might want to check before proceeding with your project. However, budget is such a critical issue that at least we will touch base on this subject. If you would like to hear more about this, please contact: Rand@HomeArchitects.com 828 . 269 . 9046.

HOME ARCHITECTS ® method of cost control:

When creating the design and Construction Documents, this architectural firm lists the "goodies" (higher-end features that are sure to become budget busters or that are certain to cost more) as "Owner Optional Upgrades". The firm typically has about 10 +/- of these options. In this manner, the Base Bid items are the most economical and reasonable way to build the project, within the boundaries of what the Architect feels is prudent design and construction techniques and materials. The Base Bid is still of reasonable quality and durability.

The Optional Upgrades are like dessert: an a la cart menu of tasty features that the Contractor is requested to price. Then YOU make the choice if you want some, one, or none of those higher-end features. That places YOU in charge of how much you spend. Sounds easy, doesn't it? It actually takes quite a bit of experience and skill at assembling documents, specifications and bid forms to coordinate this. Something the HOME ARCHITECTS ® have mastered over decades. That is enough of this subject, which has strayed from the main topic of this book.

You should mention to your Architect that you would like to build your

house for \$_____. Or for \$_____ / HSF. And then discuss that with the Architect as to how to achieve that. If you are at the lower end, say goodbye to almost all or most of your "'goodies.'" Even though Architects are creative people, they cannot produce a large design with stone turrets and marble floors for \$100/HSF. If you have a more reasonable \$/SF budget, you will have an enthusiastic response.

Please do NOT blame your Architect for your desired wants and for possibly unrealistic financial goals. You want an Architect that will tell you the truth, rather than surprising you later. No, your Architect will not provide you with a cost estimate for the construction. If they do, they are fools. There is no Architect that can accurately predict what any Builder will charge you to construct any particular design. That implies liability. Your Architect may have an idea of the possible \$/HSF but he will not guarantee this. He is not an insurance company. He/ she runs a design firm.

Listen to his/her input carefully and believe them. Work with them to adjust your project in the early stages before it will cost a lot to alter the design. Don't insist on more square footage if you don't want to pay for it, or for higher end materials if you don't have the cash to pay for that. In other words: be realistic. Understand that you will have to pay for what you want. That is not the Builder's problem or the Architect's problem. That belongs to you. Probably not what you wanted to hear: the Truth.

THE VALUE OF AN ARCHITECT: Now then: your Architect CAN make your house LOOK more expensive and more interesting than it actually costs to build. It's called "curb appeal" and the "Investment in the Design." Your Architect is trained, experienced and licensed to produce outstanding designs that look wonderful. And humble doesn't have to be bland. Trust your Architect to design a very nice house for you that looks pricier than it really was. That's one of the values of using a licensed Architect. They take their role in the project very seriously and will go above and beyond the call of duty to please you and to create a great design that is life-giving and beautiful. And your Architect will do whatever they can to be your friend and try to help you meet your objectives and to help you have

fun in the process. And they just might save you some money as well, due to their efficient planning & designing.

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SITE FEATURES

If you know about them, ask the Surveyor to locate them.

If you are very familiar with your land, and you know where certain nice features are located, make sure you mention these to your Architect, before he coordinates with your Surveyor. Why? So that the Architect can list these features to be located on the Survey by the Surveyor. Then, these nice features might be able to be incorporated into the design. Don't keep them a secret.

You can buy these directly.

You may feel that you have to be very focused on telling your Architect or Contractor what tile, appliances, toilets, sinks, bathtubs & light fixtures that you want in your house. Don't stress about this. Architectural firms like the HOME ARCHITECTS ® will specify in their documents that YOU are going to provide these and that the Builder will install them. This also saves you tens of thousands of dollars in Contractor and Sub-Contractor mark-up. Because you are going out and buying these items. You do not bring them home. The Contractor calls the warehouse for them when he is ready for them. More detail about that in another book by the HOME ARCHITECTS ®.

Therefore, in terms of what you feel you have to inform your Architect about, this is not critical. And buying these yourself can not only be fun, but it guarantees that you get exactly what you want. And these items come off the bottom line of the Contractor, so your house costs less. Some Contractors may complain about this practice, but these days, this has often become standard practice. You want a Builder that accepts this. No one deserves to charge you extra for what you, yourself went out and bought. So: do research these items and make sure that anything involving a particular size, like the appliances has manufacturer cut sheets (electronically linked is preferred). And provide this information to your Architect. Because: if you don't, what you want may not fit! It becomes your responsibility to give the Architect the list of what you want and the associated sizes and utility connections. Which means the easiest thing to do is to copy and paste the electronic pages from manufacturers' catalogs and forward those URLs to your Architect. He/she will take that

information and incorporate those sizes and connections into their documents so that what you want will work and fit.

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TIME SCHEDULE

This can vary.

You may want to schedule the design and construction of your project. Allow 2 months to 6 months for design and at least a year for construction. The Design Phase can take more or less, depending on you. Why you? Because your Architect will typically stop his work while you are reviewing what he sent you and until you approve him to proceed. If he can't move forward until you allow him to do so, you are the one controlling that time span. So, the time beyond a couple of months is normally attributed to client review/stop/start time.

Regarding construction time: the smaller and simpler the project, the less time it will take. The larger and more complex the project, the more time it will take. If you are building a huge castle; it may take years, not just months. So: it all depends.

Pretty simple logic there. And if you make changes to the design or to the under-construction project, that will add more time to your overall planned project schedule. Plan on several changes in your schedule. Nothing proceeds exactly as you may have imagined it. And be careful of getting too hung up on everything happening with precision timing. Especially if you are new to this. Let's face it, this is not a triage unit on the front lines of a military conflict somewhere. This is a nice house for you, perhaps back in the woods. An extra few months probably won't make much difference in the grand scheme of things. But it would be good to have a general schedule, just so you can plan your life in large chunks.

If you want to get serious about scheduling, your Architect can put your project's construction onto a spreadsheet and then request that Contractors provide a construction schedule. Most builders don't like doing this, as it then puts them under the gun and they would prefer not to have that pressure. How critical the timing of your project is must be your call. Word to the wise: be careful of insisting on a strict short construction schedule. Your Builder could decide to charge you extra for added manpower he might have to engage to make that happen and he won't do that for free. Better to let your Contractor suggest a time frame, then add another month to that and have that be in your agreement with them. That way, they won't feel that you are pressuring them. But this is again steering away from the main topic of this book, which is to have a list of things to help you prepare for your project.

They are your dreams. Describe them.

Now is the time to dream about what your house can become. If you have a particular fantasy that you have always wanted for a feature for your dream home, and that is realistic for your budget, NOW is the time to mention those things. Only you can know what they are. Things like:

Equestrian barn

Hot tub on an outdoor deck

Firepit on an outdoor terrace

Car wash in your Garage

Whatever you may have dreamed about. Get them out now & list them.

Beware of saving something that costs you more to keep it than to leave it.

My wife, Merry, is a real estate broker. She sometimes has a client that insists that she find a house for them that fits all their old furniture. Some people have giant sectional sofas and this means that normal size houses won't fit their furniture. So they end up buying a much larger house costing hundreds of thousands of dollars more than if they would have donated their furniture to charity, taken a tax write-off and used the savings to buy new furniture.

This is not a wise course of travel. It is economically wasteful. You are cutting your nose off to spite yourself. Is it more important that you save a few thousand bucks to buy new furniture or to save hundreds of thousands on the cost of the house you are buying? Beware of self-imposed false economies like this. Listen to your Architect. Unless you have sentimental reasons to hang on to aging furniture that is of an odd size, you may be better off buying new.

And what is the point of mentioning this? Well, the same principal applies to a new home being designed and built for you. Do you really need for your living area to be 12' longer, just to fit that old sofa? The cost could be \$50,000 or more added to the cost of your new house. And at some point, you are going to be faced with wanting to have some cost reductions of your proposed new house (see Chapter 18). Don't go crazy with old furniture. Don't let it dictate reasonable room sizes.

All that being said, if you do have existing classic furnishings that you would like to use in the newly designed home and they are of reasonable, normal

size, by all means, take a digital photo of each and paste them onto this list of items and also list their size: length x width x height. And name them “Master Bed”, “Master BR nightstands”, “Foyer hall tree”, etc.

The same goes for paintings and sculpture and the like.

Afterword

Okay, now you have filled out a nice typed checklist of items to give to your Architect. Well done! Most people never do that and these matters end up either being neglected or discovered later, perhaps at inconvenient times in the project. So you are ahead of the game.

Now what? Well, the next logical step is to hire your Architect. You may first want to Walk Your Land with the Architect and that too, is a logical thing to do. See:

<http://www.homearchitects.com/walk-your-land-with-the-architect>