

Is DESIGN/BUILD for You?

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Custom building is a very daunting process that requires much research by the consumer. It's an educational process that reasonably begins with interviewing architect, builder, and interior design professionals to evaluate their particular services and expertise. As an established design/build firm with over 25 years of experience, we bring a unique approach to custom home building by integrating all of the disciplines into one comprehensive service under one roof.

There are many benefits to working with a truly integrated design/build company. Builders and architects, as well as interior designers, are beginning to partner more and more to offer a design/build service to meet a growing consumer interest in a well integrated and professional management team.

It is particularly advantageous to have the architect, builder, and interior designer together at the inception of

the project during design development. Apart from the convenience for everyone involved, it creates a forum for communication among the experts on design, construction, and cost.

The knowledge of cost as a design tool is critical to a successful project. Time and again, projects either have to be redesigned or don't get built because the cost exceeds the budget. With design/build, the architect/builder team will design and cost the project at the start. The architect can tailor the design to budget; the builder can provide a better targeted and more precise construction cost; and the interior designer can pre-determine and specify all finishes and selections. Clients become empowered to direct their investment where it most benefits their priorities and lifestyle.

Well documented construction drawings and specifications are also essential to custom building. These documents

will ultimately define the architects/builder's responsibilities. A thorough set of construction documents is your best check and balance for protecting your best interest.

Change orders and cost overruns are probably a client's worst fear when it comes to custom building. However, well integrated drawings, specifications, and cost information can virtually eliminate change orders. The only change order issued would be for a client requested change, which can be efficiently implemented by the design/build team. Construction progress stays on track, and the client realizes savings of time and money.

Another advantage to design/build is the elimination of finger pointing because the project is wholly managed by one entity. "The buck stops here" has never been truer. The project's success in all areas, including design, construction, and finances, becomes the responsibility

(and liability) of the architect/build firm. For the client, this results in a smoother process and ultimately less stress.

In addition, the builder can be thoroughly familiar with the project's plans and specifications well before construction begins, since he will have been involved with the project since inception. This will allow for a seamless and expedient start to construction once the plans and

specifications are finalized. Similarly, the architect, as an integral part of the team, will be readily available to provide consultation and project oversight as part of the overall service.

The working relationship that develops early between the team and client is an equally important benefit to the design/build process. Mutual respect and confidence will establish a good

foundation for win-win solutions when problems arise. This will greatly enhance everyone's experience.

The most important criteria when selecting a design/build team is integrity, expertise, and reputation. Ultimately, it is the level of integrity brought to the table by all parties that will determine a good working relationship and a successful project. ■