

Building a Custom Home

Are your needs specialized enough to warrant building a custom-designed home, or would a tract home built to certain specifications suit your needs just as well? We can help you decide. The cost of building your custom home and its anticipated value should be consistent with real estate values of the surrounding neighborhood. When analyzing your situation, we ask if you want to make your house livable for yourself, or make it more salable to the next owner?

Analyze Your Wants and Needs

Share everything you can with us: your thoughts, notes, sketches, photos from magazines - anything that illustrates what you like. Tell us about your routines, the way you function in your current home, and what you like and don't like about it. It's often said that architects not only have the answers; they also know which questions to ask. For instance:

- How many rooms will you need?
- How will the home function?
- Who will use it and how?
- What are your tastes?
- How long do you plan to live in the home?
- Do you work at home?
- How much time do you spend in the living areas, bedrooms, kitchen, den, office or utility space?
- How much time and energy are you willing to invest to maintain your house?

By asking a wide range of questions about your goals, we can outline the scope of your project in detail. Doing so also sets the stage for building cost-efficiency into your project. By setting parameters early in the process, we can help you control costs before you even break ground.

Marry Your Wants with Practicality

There are so many decisions to be made in the planning stages of a building project and during construction. These decisions will determine how your new home will function, what it will cost and what it may be worth in the future. If consulted in the earliest planning stage, we can help you make smart decisions about your home's design that will serve you in surprising ways. It's critical to have a realistic understanding of the potential and limitations of your project's budget. Often we can propose ways of altering square footage or the type of materials to be used. We are especially knowledgeable in marrying your goals with practicality.

Design for Your Future

If this is your Aforever@ home, we can: provide flexible design options to accommodate your changing family size or reduced mobility as you grow older; help choose certain amenities that can affect

long-term value and re-sale; propose ways to lower energy costs and house maintenance over the long term; even suggest features such as window options that can protect carpets, flooring, and upholstery from damaging ultraviolet rays. While the list of possibilities seems endless, we can help you see the big picture and design solutions with the long term in mind.

Visualize the Design

Once we define together what is to be built, we can help you visualize the design possibilities in a number of ways. Using rough sketches we can show you the general arrangement of your new house and its effect on the site. While not finished construction documents, these visual representations are meant to show possible approaches for you to consider. We can refine these concepts until a solution is developed that meets your needs. Depending on the project, we might also provide three-dimensional renderings, build models or even stake the site so you can physically see important features, such as traffic flow, access, and views. After your approval, the design is developed even further. We will prepare detailed drawings to illustrate floor plans which show all the spaces to be built in their correct proportions, down to almost every detail. Outline specifications are also prepared that specify the primary materials and finishes to be used. We can also provide interior design services to help you get the most out of the design process right up to selection and placement of furniture, wall color schemes, fabrics, and window treatments. These important finishing touches, advised by your architect, ensure continuity with the design of the home and enhance its architecture.

Schedule the Work

After the design phases are complete, the management and scheduling of the construction work is critical. The actual work of construction could disrupt your lifestyle considerably. The many details that need to be addressed can be overwhelming. Making such decisions and coordinating the necessary manpower and materials requires professional attention. We have been through the construction process many times; this may be the first time for you. Depend on us as much as possible. We can help anticipate problems so that your decisions are followed, construction is carried out efficiently, and the project is kept on track.

Choosing and Planning Your Residential Site

It's tempting to look for that idyllic location to build your dream home, but it's best to talk with an architect first. After discussing your ideas and available resources, we can help you prepare a preliminary budget that reflects what you want, what you can afford, and what types of properties might suit both criteria. A little work up-front can make your search for the right site more efficient, and can present some unexpected, exciting possibilities. The earlier in the planning process you consult an architect, the better you prepare yourself for finding a site that matches your dreams with reality.

Explore the Potential of Your Site

The property where you'll build your home may present some distinct design opportunities and perhaps some hidden hazards. We can help you unmask the character and potential costs of your site - before you buy. For example, you'll probably want to take advantage of each favorable view and sun exposure while protecting your home against wind and weather. Are there existing trees on the site that you'll want to save? Are utilities such as water, sewer, natural gas, electric, telephone and TV cable available? How much privacy do you want between your house and the surrounding community? Which school district services your area? Are there other costs associated with the site such as traffic impact fees, landscaping assessments, garbage or trash removal fees? Finally, would purchase of the property leave you with enough in your project budget to develop a home? A clear understanding of such factors can help you make smart decisions in choosing the site for your new home.