

The following are some of the advantages that are offered through design/build.

1. One Accountable Expert - Licensed architects and staff are responsible for the entire project from design through construction. This singular entity simplifies communication and provides cohesiveness between design and construction. Since architects are responsible for both design and construction, the inevitable design decisions that arise during construction, can be kept in harmony with the original intent of the design.
2. Consistency of Interest - It has been asked if the design/build method of delivery can lend itself to a "conflict of interest". The truth is that design/build provides the client with a "consistency of interest". Architects who operate as both architect and builder do not need to rely on other builders for referrals for architectural work nor on other architects for referrals for construction business. There is no one to please but the owner as it is the owner whose recommendation will lead to future work.
3. Accuracy in Construction Estimating - From the beginning, architects can develop design concepts that reflect a realistic understanding of construction costs and the budget established by the client.
4. Superior Construction Management - Construction is managed by an architect who is on the job daily. This ensures that the drawings are interpreted properly to maintain the original design intent.
5. Streamlined Construction Process - The design/build process can deliver the completed project faster than other construction methods. This time savings translates into cost savings for the client.
6. Reduced Architectural Fees - With the design/build option, the client receives a substantially increased amount of architectural administration through the course of everyday construction management, while normally eliminating the construction administration fee. Also, architectural fees can be included in the construction cost financing, greatly reducing out-of-pocket expenses.
7. "Turn-key" Operation - Clients appreciate the ability to provide a total design-build package. While they may not have the time to observe the job themselves, clients have at their disposal one point of contact who understands low maintenance, energy-efficient design and has experience with local trades and craftsmen.

Ultimately, the design/build delivery approach can make for a more enjoyable construction experience. Many prospective homeowners, after working closely with an architect, dread turning their project over to an unknown builder. These clients have come to appreciate the continuity and familiarity inherent in the design/build approach and trust in having the design/build firm responsible for their construction.

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Once the client is satisfied with Design Development, the plans are “signed off” and the architect may proceed with the final plans, called the Construction Documents.

Construction Documents

Perhaps the most important product that an architect can provide is a set of high-quality construction documents. These documents include the final sealed architectural drawings, the specifications and allowances. The documents serve as bidding plans and are required to obtain building permits. A good set of construction documents will be accurate, well detailed, and thorough. When an architect provides a proposal for architectural services, there must be adequate money to sufficiently cover the time required to prepare quality documents. Some clients try to save money early on in architectural fees, by requesting that the architect prepare a minimum set of drawings. This can lead to unresolved situations occurring during construction that can be very costly through change orders and extras.

Construction Documents include floorplans, elevations, building section, framing plans, electrical plans, plumbing riser diagrams and other details required to obtain building permits or to describe particular areas of concern.

Bidding & Negotiation

Once plans and specifications are complete, an architect can provide bidding and negotiation assistance. The architect can help pre-qualify prospective bidders and distribute to them sets of construction documents. During the bidding process, the architect addresses questions, and assures that each bidder is providing construction numbers on an “apples and apples basis”. When bids are received, an architect’s role is to integrate the bids and assist in the selection of the builder.

Construction Administration

Another valuable service provided by architects is construction administration. During construction the architect can serve as the client’s representative in the field, observing the construction to verify its compliance with the construction documents. The architect may provide architectural assistance such as the review of shop drawings, and processing change orders. Architects that can work well with builders are important to the success of the project. Also finding builders who can work with architects is just as important. These are usually the better builders who appreciate an architect’s involvement in the construction process. Construction can be a very stressful undertaking and compatible personalities are helpful in building homes as well as working relationships.

Design/Build Advantages

An alternate way in which some architects can handle construction is through Design-Build. While people may refer to various methods of construction as “design-build”, I am a big proponent of the architect being responsible for the actual construction of a project. Over the last ten years, I have been responsible for dozens of design/build projects in Southern New Jersey and Long Beach Island, and I have found that clients receiving design/build services are quick to learn the advantages of this delivery approach. These advantages are ideally suited to the custom residential construction market. Today’s home buyer wants to buy or build a home with as many customized features as possible. The Design/Build process allows home buyers the best input and flexibility in being able to build the home of their dreams.

Architecture & Residential Construction

By
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Architects are an essential part in the construction process of new homes and renovations. From feasibility studies through the final construction of a project, architects provide the design expertise and construction experience that are essential in the success of residential projects. In New Jersey, Architects are required to provide sealed plans for the construction of every new home or addition with the only exception being the person who would seem to need an architect the most: *the person who intends to build his or her own home with the intention of living in it for more than a year.*

Programming

A client will usually begin to work with an architect by presenting information that is considered to be the “program”. A program includes functional requirements, aesthetic tendencies and construction budget. Many of my clients come in for a first visit with magazines, photos of homes they like and dislike, lists of functional needs, and sometimes even a crude floorplan. We then distill this information into a more formal program. The program is used to define client needs in new home construction as well as in additions and renovations.

Feasibility Studies

Architects can provide their experience to a client who is intending to build an addition or renovation to an existing structure but is unsure as to what can be done. The architect can determine the structural and design implications of a proposed structure and respond to existing conditions during subsequent design phases.

An architect can help a client determine the legal feasibility of a project by working within the site's given zoning regulations. With an engineer's survey, an architect works within allowable setbacks, height restrictions, and flood zone regulations (when applicable) to arrive at an allowable building envelope. Additional limitations of a site may include the allowable percentage of coverage and floor area ratios which are intended to protect a neighborhood's density.

Many times a client's budget is the deciding factor when determining the feasibility of a project. An architect who is experienced with construction costs may be able to give construction estimates for various scenarios, allowing the client to choose the best direction to take.

Schematic Design

Once a client is comfortable with the feasibility of a project, the architect will begin Schematic Design. Schematic Design is a loose, sketchy phase that depicts the clients program in graphic form. This phase is intentionally loose-it is to allow for and encourage input from the client. Changes can be made during this phase-even big ones. Architects would much prefer to hash out the design during Schematic Design than to make costly changes later in the design process. Typically, an architect will provide floorplans, an elevation and a building section during a Schematic Design presentation. Once something is on paper, a better construction estimate can be made.

Design Development

A client and architect should both be satisfied with the general direction that the Schematic Design is taking before proceeding to the next design phase called Design Development. This phase takes the Schematic Design to a higher level of detail, by integrating preliminary structural and mechanical systems with the plans. Changes can still be made during this phase, although they will tend to be smaller in scale.