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The Steps Involved in Design and Construction--What to Expect

Design and construction projects involve several steps. Typically, projects go through the following six phases. However, on some projects several of these steps may be combined or there may be additional ones.

Step 1 Programming / Deciding What to Build

The homeowner and architect discuss the requirements for the project (how many rooms, the function of the spaces, etc.), testing the fit between the owner's needs, wants, and budget.

Step 2 Schematic Design / Rough Sketches

The architect prepares a series of rough sketches, known as schematic designs, which show the general arrangement of rooms and of the building on the site. Some architects also prepare models to help visualize the project. The homeowner approves these sketches before proceeding to the next phase.

Step 3 Design Development / Refining the Design

The architect prepares more detailed drawings to illustrate other aspects of the proposed design. Floor plans show all the rooms in correct size and shape. Outline specifications are prepared listing the major materials and room finishes.

Step 4 Preparation of Construction Documents

Once the homeowner has approved the design, the architect prepares detailed drawings and specifications, which the contractor will use to establish actual construction cost and build the project. These drawings and specifications become part of the building contract.

Step 5 Hiring the Contractor

The homeowner selects and hires the contractor. The architect may be willing to assist in making some recommendations. In many cases, homeowners choose from among several contractors they've asked to submit bids on the job. The architects can help you prepare bidding documents as well as invitations to bid and instructions to bidders.

Step 6 Construction Administration

While the contractor will physically build the home or addition, the architect can assist the homeowner in making sure that the project is built according to the plans and specifications. The architect can make site visits to observe construction, review and approve the contractor's application for payment, and generally keep the homeowner informed of the project's progress. The contractor is solely responsible for construction methods, techniques, schedules, and procedures.