

The Residential Design Process

Provided By: Studio B6, LLC

Introduction:

Since most individuals interested in hiring a designer are unfamiliar with the architectural process, we have compiled this information to provide a better understanding of the services we offer to our residential clients.

The design services listed in this brochure represent the full range of the residential design services we offer. Please note, some residential projects do not require all of these services, in these instances, we can tailor our services around the specific needs of the client and project.

On some projects, such as small additions or renovations it is sometimes more cost effective for the client to have the designer/architect/engineer prepare a set of “permit drawings”. These drawings contain the minimum required information for the builder to provide the client with an accurate cost estimate (that matches the plans) as well as obtain a building permit from the local regulatory agencies.

In other cases, when more up-front in depth information is required, a full set of detailed specifications are in order. Documents such as; detailed multi interior elevations, specific material details, schedules and sometimes full color renderings are needed to construct the project per the clients’ wishes and original design intent.

The Process

A designer’s most important skill is the ability to listen. By listening carefully, we assist our clients in achieving their needs and wants as well as their dreams and desires. Through a close working relationship, the owner and designer together create a unique and distinctive home.

The process of designing and constructing a new home or a home renovation is a series of decision-making activities. It’s a continual process of studying, investigating and analyzing various options. The designer acts as your guide and advocate throughout this process.

At SB6, our design process actually begins when we have an initial meeting with a potential client. This initial meeting generally lasts about 30 to 60 minutes and is free of charge. If you are planning a new construction project we could either meet at your existing home, our office or your potential building site.

At this initial meeting, we would discuss the client’s objectives, aesthetics, space planning, financial goals and schedule. We would then use the information gathered at this meeting to prepare a “Letter of engagement / Proposal for Design Services” for your project. Once we receive your signed Letter of Agreement and project retainer (if applicable), we would then proceed onto Phase I services.

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Programming / Document Existing Conditions Defining Your Needs & Wants

Agency Interface (Phase I)

Every project requires that the design parameters be known. Local agencies dictate what can and cannot be done on any given parcel. Planning agencies, both local and jurisdictional dictate zoning ordinances that set height restrictions, setbacks and coverage allotments. Local utility districts govern utility easements and sewer allocations. Public Roads departments have requirements for maximum and minimum access from the public roads to private driveways. Homeowners associations also govern what can and cannot be done. HOA'S often have materials and surfaces restrictions, architectural requirements, setback and height restrictions as well as landscaping restrictions. The accumulation of the above information is necessary prior to the beginning of any residential project. Once these parameters are defined and established the design phase can begin.

Programming (Phase II)

During the programming phase we work with you to help define your goals and objectives for the project. The need may be "more space" while the desire is "to have a room where I can read a book in quiet." We will have an initial meeting to review the specific space requirements, required modifications as well as review the reality of budget allowances. Based on the initial project meeting, SB6 will prepare a written program, which describes the general space requirements and the nature of each space. The written program shall be reviewed and approved by the Client as defining the initial goals of the project.

Documenting Existing Conditions (Phase III)

For new construction projects, documenting existing conditions involves acquiring information such as a site plan of the existing property, zoning by-laws, and restrictive covenant information (if applicable). Addition and renovation projects also require a thorough investigation of existing conditions, details and dimensions. The entire house must be photographed, measured and recorded. If drawings of the existing structure are available, we will review and verify information as needed. The information gathered will be used to prepare accurate "as-built" drawings depicting existing conditions in plan and elevation views. These drawings will serve as a foundation for future explorations and detailed work on your home. We will review with the client the potential involvement of any other site engineering or outside consultants. If it is determined that any site consultant services are required, we will assist the client in obtaining fee proposals from the appropriate consultants.

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Conceptual Design, Schematic Form (Phase IV)

Rough Sketches;

These preliminary plans depicting the proposed home, additions or renovations are developed based upon the written program as well as the context of your particular site. We believe that a successful “extension” of an existing home should blend seamlessly with the original. The entire ebb and flow of existing functions will be considered during planning of additions and renovations.

The schematic design drawings (in CAD) prepared during this phase will depict the proposed home or proposed addition/renovations in sufficient detail to confirm the concept your approval as well as containing enough information to convey the projects intent with potential contractors. If required by the budget, adjustments to the scope of work can be addressed at this time. The revised scope of work and revised drawings will be used as a guide for preparing the detailed construction drawings that will follow.

It is very important that you are pleased with the development of the design at this stage. Keep in mind; it is much easier to make changes now when your project is on paper than later on when formal documents are created, or foundations have been poured and walls erected. Before we proceed to the next phase, we will ask for your formal approval of the Phase IV sketches.

Design Development (Phase V)

Refining the Design;

During this phase we prepare more detailed drawings to illustrate other aspects of the proposed design. Design Development means just what it suggests. Using the approved schematic design as a basis, we work together with our clients to refine the design so that it more precisely fits their tastes and needs. The projects dimensions become tighter, door and window sizes and operability are confirmed, mechanical design and energy consumption options are researched, venting avenues explored and the relationship to the exterior environment is balanced with efficient and economical design methodologies. We meet with our clients as needed during this phase to make sure that each refinement to the design meets with their approval. We research the materials that will go into the house, and whenever possible work with the selected builder to make sure that the evolving scheme is within budget. If applicable, we outline major materials and room finishes.

Construction Documents (Phase VI)

Recording Our Decisions;

At this point, we prepare the construction documents, including preliminary framing documents. These are the detailed drawings and specifications which the contractor will eventually use to both establish actual construction costs and to build the project. Included in the drawings will be descriptions of the foundations, framing, floor plans, elevations, door and window schedules, finishes and specifications. Client directed changes during this phase should be limited, as much as possible, to material selections and not major shifts in the floor plan or elevations. Coordinating changes through all of the drawings may add considerable time and increase project costs.

We like to think of these documents as records of all the decisions we’ve made throughout the course of designing the project. These documents convey our decisions to others such as potential builders, structural engineers and energy consultants. The builders and tradesmen will use the documents to supply the materials and construct the project. The local building inspectors will use these documents to issue permits and make inspections of the work. Banks and other lenders will use these documents when providing financing. As you can see, all parties during the construction of a project use these important documents; it is to your advantage to make sure the drawings are accurate and complete. If there are unknowns they should be listed accordingly to avoid budget missteps later on.

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Engineering, Structural and Soils (Phase VII)

Once the preliminary framing drawings have been produced the drawings will be handed off to a Structural Engineer and a Geo-tech Engineer (if applicable). The Geo-tech engineer will determine the soils capability to support the structure and the structural engineer will determine final structural and construction methodologies based on the soils capability.

Energy Calculations: (Phase VIII)

Any time conditioned space is added to a structure an energy audit is required by the state. The energy consultant will calculate the existing and proposed energy consumption. The energy parameters will be considered during the early stages of the design process. The final calculations and report confirms the proposed design meets or exceeds the minimum requirements set by the state.

Permit Procurement (Phase IX)

Once the construction documents have been completed, reviewed and approved by all parties the project is ready for agency submittal. The agencies include: Planning Department (Community Development), Public Utility District, Public Roads (Engineering) Department, Environmental Department and Building Department.

The time for initial agency review time varies from area to area as well as from season to season (Summer/Spring/early Fall being the longest). In the busiest of agencies it is not uncommon for an initial 4 to 6 week review cycle. Once all review comments have been addressed the permits are issued and construction can begin.

Construction Observation (Phase X)

Getting it built the way you want;

Up until now, the project has been confined to discussion, planning and two and three dimensional drawings. When construction begins, the project moves from drawings to a physical reality.

If contracted to do so, we will periodically visit the project site to observe the work in place and assure that construction is progressing in accordance with our plans. We can meet regularly on site with the client and contractor to review any issues. We are also available to the contractor, his/her suppliers and subcontractors during the project to explain or address questions that arise during construction. Each site visit is followed with a Field Report covering work in progress, observations and recommendations. Our role during this phase is to observe the progress of construction for conformance to the design intent. The contractor is solely responsible for construction methods, techniques, schedules and procedures. The contractor supervises and directs the construction work on the project.

The path to a completed building project is paved with a lot of challenges and uncertainties. There are many decisions to be made, decisions which have a strong impact on how the project looks and functions over time. It is especially important in residential renovation projects that we provide construction observation service. When renovating an existing structure there are always issues that arise during construction. The issues that do arise are usually due to some previously unforeseen condition, which was either concealed or not apparent until the actual demolition, and construction had begun. It is for this reason we always recommend our involvement during the construction phase so that we are available to ensure that any changes do not negatively impact the original design intent.

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A Note Regarding Designer Fees

There are numerous ways by which designers determine their fees. Our fee structure is based independently on the complexity and time requirements of each project. However, based upon past precedent, we have found that our fees generally run about 6% to 10% of the overall cost of construction. If an hourly fee is agreed upon, all project phases are estimated by time and tasks (Design, Administration, Drafting, Travel, Miscellaneous expenses) and invoiced accordingly on a bi-monthly basis. This is why it is important for us to meet with each client to discuss their potential project prior to quoting any design fees.

Summary

As a firm specializing in residential design, we are very aware of how important a home is to its owners, what enormous emotional energy is lavished upon it, and how unnerving it is to be at the mercy of others in the shaping or reshaping of that home. With this in mind we have developed our services to avoid as much of that discomfort as possible. We will help you identify your needs; design solutions that satisfy those needs, and develop the documents that communicate your solution to the builders. At SB6, we understand that an experienced designer provides more than "blueprints". At SB6, we are not only designers, we are also people who understand the importance of good communication and who share a love of homes.

It is our hope that the above information has helped to clarify the value that our service would bring to your project, and that you will give us the opportunity to help you with your dreams for a new custom home, addition or remodel.

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