

REMODELING DESIGN PLANNING GUIDE



Hopkins & Porter

www.hopkinsandporter.com

Architecture • Remodeling • Handymen

Why is Design the Crucial First Step in Any Remodeling Plan?

Have you recently begun thinking about remodeling and already feel overwhelmed?

It may be as simple as a fresh look at the familiar. Or it may be a very involved process requiring major renovation. In either case, architects and designers know how to bring your ideas to life when designing your home.

With years of professional experience and using the tools of their trade, designers make a composition, layer upon layer, with design elements that together create an inviting, harmonious home. For the process to be a success, however, there must be communication and trust. By listening to your dreams and by understanding your needs, a good designer then applies his expertise, education, and training to produce a workable remodeling plan that reflects your personality, meets your needs, and adds beauty to your home. The end result of a productive partnership is that moment when you, the homeowner, actually begin to live in and to enjoy a great remodeling design.

What makes a qualified architect/ designer indispensable?

Good architects and designers have the talent of being able to visualize space creatively. On top of that, they have years of education and experience learning how to develop a distinguished design at the highest level of quality in an organized, professional manner. Intensely visual, these individuals with their innate love of design and extensive training know how to imprint a home with the spirit and personality of the family living there. The creativity needed to see the possibilities of a house is one of the most important assets that only a design professional can bring to a project.

A top quality architect who is licensed by the state is a well-educated professional who must first earn a bachelor's or master's degree in Architecture, then work years as an apprentice to a licensed architect, and then pass a bar exam to become a licensed architect. This educational background, coupled with practical experience, is vital. You, the homeowner, do not need to know how to make something work structurally, or how to open up a floor plan, or how to give your home the style you wish to achieve. That is what a good architect/designer does for you.

Architects/designers take into account all the design elements

If you plan on having additional design professionals working on your home, such as an interior designer or a landscape architect, it is best if they collaborate early on in the process with the architect on matters such as furniture placement and openings to exterior elements and accent lighting plans. This will help avoid common problems like traffic corridors running through a living space or inefficient locations of electrical outlets. Many architects can help you with these planning issues even if there are no additional design professionals involved.

Creating the best client-architect relationship

Talk to the best architects in the area and they will tell you how much they enjoy the relationship with a client who takes an active interest and role in the design. To establish the most successful and satisfying relationship with your architect, make a personal commitment to be involved.

Start by defining your needs, what you want in terms of service, and the end result.

Some homeowners have a strong sense of what they want and simply need a consultant-type relationship. Others want significant guidance from a professional who will oversee the entire process. Both are perfectly reasonable approaches.

Set up a relationship that encourages an open exchange of ideas.

In pursuit of the home you desire, it is important to be able to trust your architect to interpret your thoughts and needs. You must be able to feel comfortable if you have to say “No, I don’t like that,” and, likewise, you need to be able to listen and consider when the designer says, “I don’t think that’s a good idea.”

Be forthcoming about your budget.

Not all projects are guided by a budget, but the majority are. Your architect must know and respect your financial parameters and priorities. With your architect you can prioritize your needs and desires for the current work along with future plans to eventually achieve all of your goals.

Lastly, ask questions, as many as you need to, as the design unfolds.

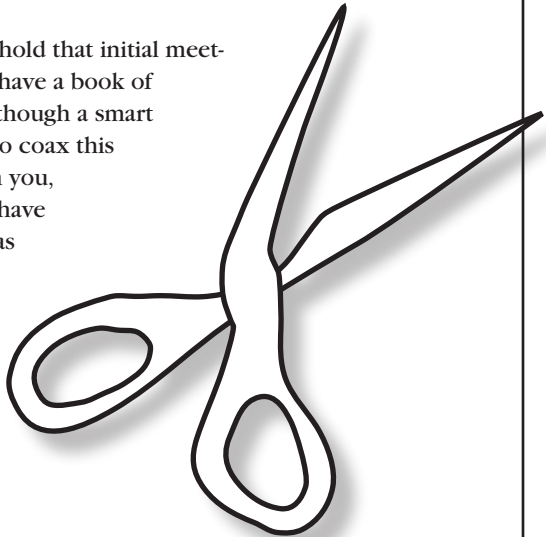
This is a creative effort on your behalf, so let yourself enjoy it, understand it and be stimulated by it.

The Homeowner as designer

The Idea Notebook

Before you start scheduling initial interviews with architects, begin to compile an Idea Notebook – it's the best tool for developing an awareness of your personal style. Spend a weekend or two with a pair of scissors, your Idea Notebook, and a stack of magazines. You will gradually be making a record of your personal style. Put in pictures, architectural and visual elements and styles that you like, and layouts of rooms that function in ways that suit your lifestyle. Jot down the design elements in houses that you'd like to incorporate into your own home, and make comments regarding those elements that you don't care for. Think hard about what you love and loathe in your current residence. Start to look at your entire environment as a rich source of design ideas.

Then, when you hold that initial meeting, you too will have a book of ideas to share. Although a smart designer is able to coax this information from you, it's a big help to have visual examples as well as verbal descriptions. It can save a tremendous amount of time.



Choosing an architect/designer

Give yourself time to interview at least two architects. Invite the architect to your home for a tour of your current residence. You can discuss the good and bad parts of your house and take a look at items you wish to incorporate into the new environment.

During the initial meeting, trust your intuition to guide you toward the best designer for you. Designing a home remodel is an intimate personal experience, so a comfortable relationship with a high degree of rapport is the best prerequisite to a satisfying end product. You may adore what an architect did for a friend, but if you don't feel comfortable expressing your ideas, or if you feel that he or she is not interested in your point of view, don't pursue the relationship. Unless you can imagine yourself working with an architect for months, keep interviewing.

Some architects maintain a high degree of confidentiality regarding their clients, but if possible, ask for references and contact them, especially those clients for whom they have worked more than once. Be sure to ask about the extent and quality of the follow-up service.

Reputation and years of experience can be important indicators to consider when making your choice. The remodeling process has been compared to the birth of a child. Pregnancy and labor are challenging, but they are a necessary lead-up to the joyful birth of the baby. Just as you need a doctor whom you trust to take you confidently through the tough stages, you also want a remodeling designer who knows the ropes and whom you can count on if problems arise. Ask references to tell you truthfully what the whole experience was like—from start to finish. Remodeling horror stories are not uncommon, but if you do your research well, you won't have one.

“Unless you can imagine yourself working with an architect for months, keep interviewing.”

Be prepared to talk in specific terms about your project and to honestly assess your lifestyle. For a home or a room to work well, function must be considered along with evolving style. Architects ask many questions; some of them may be:

- What function should each room serve? Will a living room double as a study? Will a guest room also be an exercise area? What will you do in this room?
- What maintenance issues must be addressed? Do you need low maintenance because you travel extensively?
- Do you have animals that need to be considered in the layout?
- Is your family growing or are you about to be an empty nester? Do you want space for visiting grandchildren?
- What kind of relationship do you want to establish between the interior of the house and the landscape? Do you cook on a grill frequently? Do you like to move easily from your living room to your garden?
- Is your style formal, casual or a bit of both? Do you like open or compartmentalized spaces?
- Do you have special elements, pieces of furniture, furniture layouts, or collections that need to be highlighted in your new plans?
- Do you have special storage needs?
- How do you entertain?
- Do you want your kitchen bright and sunny; do you want your family room dark and cozy?
- What words describe the feeling you want to achieve? Cheerful, open, cozy, elegant, classic?

What will the design cost?

Architects use individual contracts, standard contracts drawn up by the American Institute of Architects (AIA), or letters of agreements as legal documents. The contracts should outline project phases (programming schematic, design development, contract documents), project representation beyond basic services, additional responsibilities, the owner's responsibilities, fees, and payments to the architect, including reimbursement of expenses.

Payments may be due at the completion of each project phase, monthly or quarterly, as stated in the contract. You can usually expect to pay a retainer.

Architectural design fees, which may be based on "current market rate," are computed as a percentage of a job, a flat fee, or on an hourly basis. Expect hourly fees of over \$100 an hour, varying by experience and reputation. If an hourly rate is being used, ask if different rates are charged for an assistant's or drafter's time. Percentages may be based on construction costs and can range from 10–15 percent. Separate design fees may be charged by the hour for work done outside of the original contract. It is imperative that you are able to trust your architect and rely on his or her reputation of delivering a top-quality project in an honest, reliable fashion. You must feel that you are being given a valuable service at a fair price.



From the mind's eye to reality

Once you have found an architect you like and trust, and have signed a clear, specific agreement, you are ready to embark on this adventure.

Your architect will guide you through the decision-making process on all of its many levels. You will begin with program needs by making sure you have completely explored how you want your house to function. Then you will begin master planning. This will provide you with schematic design(s) that will answer your program needs and set the direction for more detailed decisions.

“It’s realistic to allow months to plan even a small part of your house. You may feel impatient, but it is well worth the time you invest in it.”

Those detailed decisions include everything from plumbing fixtures to paint colors and window details. Your architect can direct you to sources for that decision making process or go with you.

Allow time to carefully consider and reconsider your plans, and temper your enthusiasm to rush into decisions. If you are stuck on decision-making, ask your architect for more help.

Play with furniture placement. Review your selections as a whole to be sure they work together. This investment of time will pay handsomely in an end-result that suits your needs perfectly.

Be prepared to wait for the design process to evolve, but keep striving for a continuous flow of decisions so that your architect can bring it all together as a completed design. It’s realistic to allow months to plan even a small part of your house. You may feel impatient, but it is well worth the time you invest in it.

Then be prepared for the fun as your house is remodeled into the dream-house you have imagined and worked for with the help of your architect.

Hopkins & Porter

www.hopkinsandporter.com

Architecture • Remodeling • Handymen

12944-C Travilah Rd, Suite 204

Potomac, Maryland 20854

Phone: 301-840-9121

Fax: 301-590-9715