

TIPS

Designing a New House

If you're designing a house from scratch and are planning to use an architect or other design professional, here are some of the steps in the design process.

IDEAS

Gather some ideas of what you like and don't like before you meet with the architect. Also, put together a list of "needs versus wants" to help the architect key in on your requirements.

DRAW UP A BUDGET

Determine ahead of time how much you are willing, and can afford, to spend. Also, review your financing options and qualifications before going any further.

SHOW AND TELL

Look at homes the architect/designer has recently completed, as well as a home under construction. Focus on how the spaces in the house are arranged.

*Look At The
Architect's
References
And Designs
Before
Committing.*

CHECK REFERENCES

This step is extremely important—don't skip it. When talking to a reference ask questions such as: Did the designer meet your deadlines? Did he or she stay within your budget? Add any other questions that relate to your project.

GET A BID

Ask the designer to give you an estimate on the cost of his or her services, including any necessary construction documents. Review the bid for a week before rushing into a decision.

ROUGH SKETCHES

Schematic designs will give you an idea of how the house will sit on the lot and how the rooms of the house will be arranged.

CONSTRUCTION DOCUMENTS

Once you have come to an agreement with the architect on the design, he or she will prepare the detailed drawings that the builder will follow during construction.

THE BID PROCESS

Many architects will send the construction documents to several qualified builders. Builders in turn, will get bids from their subcontractors and suppliers — this whole process could take several weeks.