

AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH TO DESIGN, BID & BUILD

The selection of design consultants and a custom home builder is an important set of decisions. Although the process is customarily expected to begin with an architect, drawing plans, then bidding the plans to general contractors...a different approach can yield significant benefits for the owner and the project design-build team. Consider selecting the general contractor at the beginning of the process with a pre-negotiated fee agreement. The general contractor can then be charged with project organization and schedule management during both the design and construction phases...a single-source of responsibility and accountability. In addition, by hiring a general contractor with a pre-negotiated fee agreement, the process becomes more organized, directed broadly to the entire scope of the development, transparent and without financial surprises.

To complete the pre-development design, specification, budgeting and permitting processes in an orderly and timely manner, the design-build team must be guided through a carefully articulated schedule. Structure developed a project schedule called the Journey Timeline¹, for both the pre-development and construction phases of a custom home project. Communication and adherence to the schedule facilitates completion of the work on schedule and a positive experience for everyone involved. The result is a team, whose contributions are well-coordinated and maximized, therefore generating efficiencies and enhanced quality throughout the development cycle.

An important outcome of this approach is the mitigation of unintended change orders...bringing a significant financial benefit to the Owner. By working in a cohesive and methodical fashion, the team resolves and refines the design and specifications of the home before the start of construction. The plans are viewed by all of the varied perspectives on the team, e.g. contractor, architect, interior design, landscape architect, civil/soils/structural engineers. Hence, all parties involved with the coordination and implementation of the structure...its functional and aesthetic qualities...are led through a comprehensive and organized planning schedule, which eliminates surprises when the home is being built.

Another result of proactive planning prior to construction is a set of building plans that communicate the owners design decisions clearly and effectively to hundreds of people who will rely on the plans to build the home. The importance of the "construction documents" to the trades who build the home cannot be over-emphasized. We set a high standard of quality and content required within the building plans...to create a tightly-coordinated blueprint and road map...so everyone is clear about just what needs to be accomplished. A good set of plans means a much smoother, consistent experience...with predictable completion schedule as well as improved quality.

An experienced general contractor is aware of all of the issues that must be resolved to complete a project successfully. The Contractor's participation in the design phase enables the project its' highest probability of success. Moreover, an owner can have the company who will ultimately be held accountable for the home...be involved and guiding the team...a single-source of responsibility. The builders experience in the development of your custom home is necessary to help you make thoughtful and well-informed decisions at the appropriate time in the production cycle. The right contractor is best-suited therefore, to protect your interests and lead the development effort toward the goals of thoughtful design, quality and durability as well as cost and schedule efficiency. Essentially, the knowledge and experience of the builder, gives the client control over a very important and complicated endeavor...and its associated risks.

¹ See article entitled "[Introduction to the Journey](#)"