

MANNS WOODWARD STUDIOS - FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

First, Why Should I Hire An Architect? ¹

Very few people realize how complicated it is to build – that is until they find themselves lost in a maze of design options, building codes, zoning laws, contractors and so on. Not to mention lost time. Since no two building projects are exactly alike, there is no single, clear cut path, formula or process to follow.

As architects we are the one professional who has the education, training, experience and vision to guide you through the entire design/construction process, from helping you define what you want to build to helping you get the most of your construction dollar.

Architects see the big picture. We don't just design four walls and a roof – they create total environments, interiors and exteriors, that satisfy functional needs and are exciting, dynamic spaces in which we live and play.

Whether you are remodeling, adding on, or building from scratch, architects can guide the way. Working with contractors and other construction professionals, we can help you end up with a well designed project that meets your need and works with your budget and time frame.

Perhaps most importantly, an architect can save you money, time and make your life easier!

Let's face it, building is a long process that is often messy and disruptive, particularly if you are living and working in the space under construction. As architects, we look out for your interests and try to find ways to make that process as smooth and enjoyable as possible.

If your project requires engineering or other design services, we can coordinate this team of experts so you don't have to. We sort out complex building codes and zoning laws. We help you find qualified construction contractors based on your requirements. We visit the construction site to help verify that the project is being built according to plans and specifications, ensuring you're getting what you paid for.

The architect's services are a wise investment for the money, not an added cost to your project!

Because a well-conceived project can be built more efficiently and economically. We design your projects with you. As your ideas evolve, changes can be made on paper and through the computer – much less expensively than later on when construction is underway. Well coordinated construction drawings also make it easier for the contractor to accurately price and build your project.

MANNS WOODWARD STUDIOS - FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

First, Why Should I Hire An Architect? (Continued)

Because energy efficient buildings can save you money on fuel bills down the road. We can design a building to maximize heating from the sun and let in natural light, thus reducing your heating, cooling and electric bills over time.

Because the we can work with your budget and help you select the appropriate materials and level of craftsmanship at a fair price. We develop the drawings and specifications to help you get bids for construction that are based on your requirements, or we can work with your pre-selected contractor to ensure everyone is speaking the same "language."

Because we can help you choose materials and finishes that are durable as well as attractive, you may see savings on frequent maintenance and replacement costs. We work to stay ahead of the curve on construction technology and building techniques. Our familiarity with a full range of materials enables us to suggest appropriate materials for your project.

Because good design sells. A well-designed house has a higher resale value, making our services a wise and affordable long term investment solutions.

What Exactly Is A Custom Home?

A true custom home is designed and built around your specific needs and wants. It is a home where you have unlimited options and design freedom. A custom home is unlike a tract or builder home which is already designed, and allows you to "customize" by selecting your upgrades, floor finishes and maybe a bump-out or two. While the term "custom" is great for marketing these types of builder designed houses, there's really nothing "custom" about them.

A true custom home is designed scratch by architects that fully collaborate with you. We meet with you to understand your needs, wishes and budget. We develop a spatial program to design a home that works just right for you. Designing a home is a personal journey thus; we need to understand how you and your family live. Understanding your day-to-day schedules, activities, habits and how you would like to live your daily lives will affect the entire outcome of the design. All of these factors are brought together to develop home that is a distinct and unique representation of you and your family.

MANNS WOODWARD STUDIOS - FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How Much Will The House Cost?

Unfortunately this is not a question that can be answered without a solid understanding of all of the components involved in the project. In today's market construction costs are very fluid and can vary due to dozens of project factors such as site, house configuration, finishes, and the complexity of structural, mechanical and electrical systems. We suggest that you beware of anyone who will quote you with a construction cost for your home before they know a great deal about you and the project.

How Can We Be Sure We Can Afford The House?

Our firm has the ability and experience to work very closely with experienced contractors during the entire design process. Our partnership with contractors provides you with continuous cost control for the project and gain advice on construction efficiency. We are also happy to work with a builder of your choice, help you select a qualified contractor, or to refer you to someone we have worked with in the past.

Will I Need Other Design Services?

Probably. Depending on the complexity and location of the site, and the configuration of the house. A civil and/or structural engineer may be required to consult on the project. In the past clients have also elected to contract with landscape architects, lighting designers, mechanical engineers, pool consultants, kitchen consultants audio/visual consultants and interior designers. In such cases, we act as the team leader, orchestrating the consultants and the builder to achieve the maximum in creativity and quality from everyone involved in the design.

Can We Make It Bigger?

Many owners want to unknowingly dump countless extra dollars into excessively designed spaces that will rarely get used. In the end this extra space tends to be wasted and serves as a magnet for wasted energy. Thus, perhaps the best answer to this question is another question. How much do you **REALLY** need to build?

Ultimately the main question for home owners always comes down to money and the realistic needs and wants of the client. The bigger the home and the more lavish the fittings, the higher the costs. Remember that as architects we don't design these buildings without your input. A design solution evolves because of your wants and needs. Whether the outcome is large or small, it still takes skill and talent to make these spaces work well together and are attractive.

MANNS WOODWARD STUDIOS - FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Can We Make It Bigger? (Continued)

While we can and have designed large homes, sometimes the greater challenge is to work on smaller lots with tight space constraints. To develop an exciting and sustainable design that is functional, innovative and attractive is always a challenge. To reach that point, takes skill, talent and hard earned knowledge. And remember, bigger isn't always better.

How Long Does The Entire Process Take?

The length of the design and construction process for your home varies on the size and complexity of the design, and factors such as Design Review Boards and your ability to make timely decisions. On average, from the time we begin design to the time we are ready to submit the finished construction drawings for a building permit is about 4-6 months. Most of the new homes are then built within 7-12 months.

What Are Design Fees?

In today's market this is probably one of the most loaded question of all! For many people building their own home is a first time experience. Many do not have a firm grasp of all the issues and costs associated with undertaking such a monumental task. Typically our fees are only generated after we have a solid understanding of what the project requirements will be. But for arguments sake, we present a hypothetical project and the associated costs to help you better understand where your money is going and how hiring an architect or designer makes sure it's put to good use.

Since the following is an example, the figures tend to be skewed towards National Average market conditions and are subject to change as a result of fluid interest rates, costs of loans and property taxes. We advise you to use these only for what they are, a hypothetical situation and we strongly urge you to use the services of a mortgage officer or financial advisor assess current market trends and costs.

After everything is completed on a professionally full serviced project, tends to range from 3 to 10 percent of construction costs. To some clients, it seems excessive and they are unable to comprehend the added value they actually get with quality, comprehensive design services. What we need is a proper context of the true costs of design fees. So let's consider a typical 25-30 year life cycle costs of a home (30 yr mortgage/ loan).

MANNS WOODWARD STUDIOS - FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

After the mortgage has been paid the actual cost of the building can be 2-3 times the initial “sticker price”. Do note that these are representational numbers. You should use current values that reflect the area you intend to build in. As such, we will use the table on the following page as an example for a 2,000 SF custom home:

Cost of Property/ Building site:	\$100,000
Construction cost:	\$400,000 (~2,000sf x \$180-\$200/sf)
Architect’s 10% fee:	\$40,000
Broker, closing, title fees:	\$7,000
Landscaping and paving:	\$5,500
7.0% interest on \$540,000 mortgage:	\$753,000 (30 years fixed)
Taxes at \$3,000 per year:	\$90,000
Total:	\$1,395,500 over 30 years

When analyzed over time the architectural fees represent less than 2.9% of the total cost of the home. The fact that well designed homes typically have added value is not taken into consideration. When quality design is considered into the equation many homes appraise higher than its construction cost, generating a good investment profit if you ever decide to sell.

Owners who do not seek architectural services often end up paying for hidden design fees anyway. Since the design will be well documented and independent of the construction contract, the competitive bidding process will typically lower the costs spread of the design fees to make it an economical decision. Well designed homes often tend to have significantly lower utility costs than their builder home counter parts.

After all, what would you rather pay? A steady fee to your mortgage company for the next 30 years or the astronomically increasing rate for energy costs to utility companies for the entire time you live in your home?

Remember the phrase “You get what you pay for.” In the end, the return on investment for the use of architectural services are more than made up for during the life of the building.

References:

1: Why Hire An Architect? Courtesy of The American Institute of Architects