

Planning and Design

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We just want a small remodel project, do we still need to invest in design?

This is a great question that has been asked many times over. After pondering whether design is necessary for hundreds of projects over 30-plus years, my answer always seems to be the same. Good design does not guarantee success, but bad or no design does guarantee failure.

POOR PLANNING AND DESIGN

Whether a remodeling project is

designed in-house or by an independent architect, proper planning and complete design details are crucial to a successful project. Often, builders start a job before all the details are worked out just to “keep the customer happy.” In my experience, these often turn out to be problem projects.

Straightening out problems stemming from incorrect layout is a time-consuming and expensive endeavor. This is especially true of kitchens and bathrooms, where the most important work happens in the first several weeks of the job. If a carpenter must lay out a kitchen or bathroom

without a detailed tile, fixture and electrical plan, for example, it can result in expensive delays at best and disaster at worst. Outlets end up in the middle of the expensive hand-painted backsplash tile the client ordered from Italy, the toilet is roughed in too close to the pedestal sink and tub, and the light switches take a bite out of the door casings.

To combat these kinds of oversights, the most sought-after and highly skilled builders and remodelers have developed a detailed specification process for each area of the home, such as kitchens and baths. For each import-

ant element in the plan, like cabinets, countertops and light fixtures, the process describes such things as the name of the supplier, the style or type, the model number and color, and other important characteristics. This information ensures that the carpenters, plumbers, electricians and tile setters etc., have everything needed for proper layout and installation. It also serves as a product selection record in case questions arise later. When details are thought through at rough-in, the rest of the job is just filling in the pieces of the puzzle

FINGER-POINTING AT THE ARCHITECT

Even though my company is a design/build company, a portion of our work implements designs generated by architects or independent designers. For many builders, these jobs can deteriorate into finger-pointing and a tug-of-war. The adversarial relationship between designers and builders robs the project of trust and continuity, making it difficult to resolve problems, which means more time wasted.

Rather than create adversarial relationships with architects and designers, the best building and remodel companies cultivate relationships with designers and architects who want to work with high-quality builders. They look for people who respect skills and



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experience developed over many years of perfecting the building process and producing happy clients again and again.

WRONG DELIVERIES AND MISORDERS

Design and planning does not begin and end with construction documents. Proper planning goes further than drawing and selecting finishes. After all, we still have to get everything to the jobsite on time and in the proper order.

Have you ever ordered something from one of the big box stores only to find out you don't have everything you need? Installation? I thought you were going to install Would you like a flush handle for your commode? Materials that are misordered can cause expensive extra work and, just as

importantly, lost time on the jobsite. We allow our clients to select almost everything for their projects, but we ask them to never order anything themselves. The reason may not be obvious, but the order process used by the best builders in the industry incorporates a highly detailed purchase order system that verifies specifications, tracks delivery dates or backorders and ensures all of the parts needed to complete job are included in the order. In addition, the best of breed builders cultivate relationships with suppliers that give great service should anything go wrong after the item is delivered.

With a professional builder and highly detailed plans by your side, you will be assured of a successful and enjoyable building or remodel project that will serve you for many decades to come. **BG**



Tim Graham has been building homes in South Central, KY for over 30 years. He is a Master Builder, a Registered Builder and a Certified Green Professional.

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