

MODERN HOME PLANNING GUIDE

A ThoughtCraft Architects™ Publication

V1.6

WELCOME

We understand starting a large home project can be daunting. Where do you begin? How much will it cost? What’s the process? Our free guide is intended familiarize you with the basics, and outline the design and construction phases [ThoughtCraft](#) uses for residential projects.

“Design is not just what it looks like and feels like. Design is how it works.” STEVE JOBS

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WHAT IS MODERN?

Modern is less of a style and more of a philosophy. While it's often associated with clean lines, flat roofs, open floor plans, and large windows, it is not tied to any singular form or predetermined arrangement.

Historically, modernism offered an optimistic view that science and the new technologies of industrialization would produce a modern age. Since the early 20th century the evolution of modernism has shifted and morphed.

Today's modern has become more balanced with local climate, culture, and energy efficiency. Freedom in the planning of space and form without preconceptions allows us to reconsider what it means to dwell for each client.

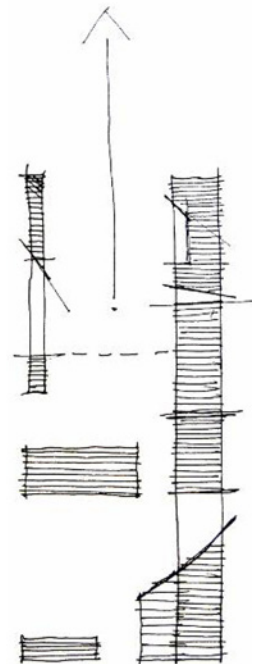


WHAT ARCHITECTS DO

Architects listen to you and serve as your advocate throughout your project. Your architect works with you to translate your needs into buildable form, addresses compliance with state and town regulations, oversees the work of the builder, and coordinates all technical and aesthetic aspects of your project. Your architect manages your budget, interviews builders, negotiates builder contracts, protects your project from unreasonable extra costs, and resolves disputes that may arise during the building process. They are charged to oversee and act in your best interest from beginning to end.

Architects solve problems and identify opportunities. The architect is the one professional who has the skills and toolkit to thoroughly analyze a problem, uncover opportunities, and create inspiring solutions. They are trained problem solvers. The education of an architect is broad, from the arts and sciences to humanities and engineering. To become a registered architect requires approximately 7 years of education, 3 years of apprenticeship, and successful completion of 7 registration exams. Architects are also required to stay abreast of changing technologies through continuing education.

Architects see the big picture. Few people realize how complicated it is to build until they find themselves lost in a maze of options, building codes, zoning laws, and contractors. Architects don't just design four walls and a roof; they create total environments (interior and exterior) that are functional and exciting places to live and work. They think in three-dimensions and can help you visualize the project before it's built.





Architects add value to your project investment. Building a home is often the largest single investment a person will make in their lifetime. Your architect helps you achieve the greatest value for your budget and needs. They plan efficient spaces, energy, water, and construction systems, and inform you of trade-offs in effort to find the best solution. Your architect represents you (not builders) through the construction process; observing the installation and quality of work by the builder and helping to resolve any issues as they arise. Most projects designed by architects function better, have lower energy and water consumption, are assessed at higher resale values, and improve your daily living experience.

For more on what architects do, check out this [VIDEO](#) by the American Institute of Architects (AIA).

HOW MUCH?, HOW LONG?

How long will it take? Designing a new modern home typically takes 6 to 10 months. Your home is crafted through iterative conversations between clients and architects. Documentation of modern design requires substantial drawing and coordination time – like the iPhone, what looks simple is actually complex with many decisions involved. A thorough set of drawings helps to avoid unnecessary costs in construction.

How much will construction cost? This varies wildly with the level of project complexity, custom details, location, and the state of the economy. As of 2021 a new custom modern home may cost anywhere from around \$250 per square foot to over \$400 per square foot. Building costs normally increase annually, but we've witnessed an acute rise in recent years. Consult your architect for a general range based on your location and specific project, and check out our blog post for the most recent [Modern Home Costs and Rates](#) in the North Carolina and Massachusetts regions.

What's in a price per square foot? This is an averaged approach to estimating and is used only at the beginning of a project to help gauge a typical cost range commensurate with quality and the type of project. The per foot cost is based on the heated square footage of a home (inside living areas), but it also bakes in the cost of garages, porches, and site work. So it is a bit of a misnomer and only used for a budgeting idea. In reality, different parts of a home cost varying amounts, for example, a kitchen costs more than a bedroom. Detailed pricing may be developed with a contractor.



Why does a modern home cost more than a builder home? You may have noticed some lower cost per square foot numbers on the Internet - some very outdated. These are typically reflective of national builder tract homes that take advantage of bulk pricing, unskilled labor, lower quality products, and very little construction supervision. In contrast, while clean line modern homes may look simple, they are more complex to execute, requiring additional coordination, continuous construction site supervision, and more skilled labor. Modern homes typically have higher quality products, built-in cabinetry, and much larger windows that quickly increase costs. Some green building strategies may also add costs but can greatly reduce monthly utility bills over the home's lifespan.

Building a home is somewhat analogous to buying a car: the cost of a Honda, Audi, and Ferrari are very different price points – all get you from point A to B, but their abilities, finishes, accessories, and long-term value are quite different.

How much do architects charge? Architects charge in a variety of ways depending on the services provided and type of project. Variations in cost generally reflect variances in the level of service. Below are typical methods for residential projects. You should consult your architect for specifics.

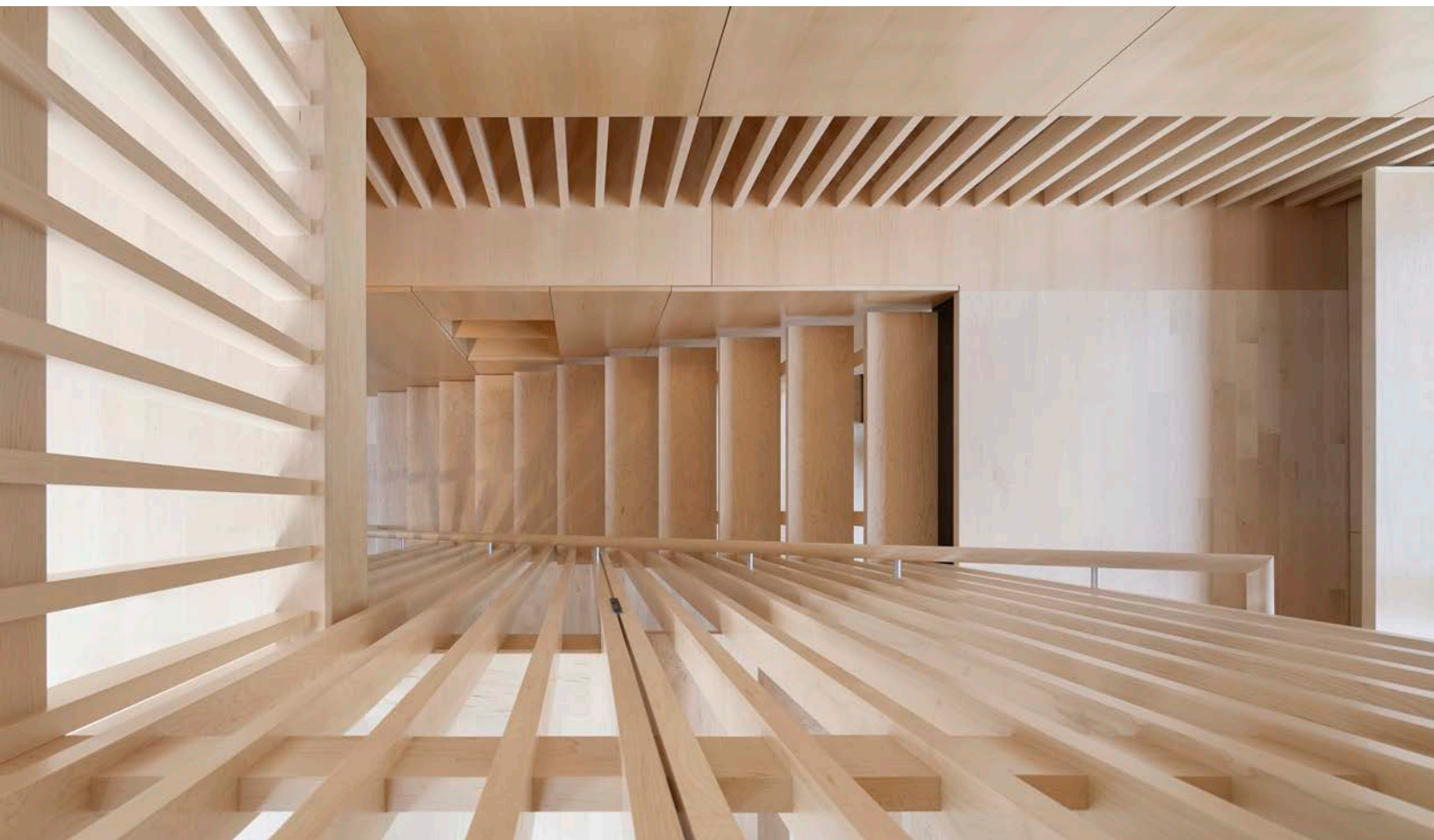
Hourly. This method is typically used when the time to complete the work is not accurately known. An architect who does residential work may charge anywhere from around \$125 to \$200 an hour depending on staff, overhead, and expertise. Rates normally increase annually.

Percentage of Construction Cost. Full design services through construction for a custom modern home may range from around 8% up to 18%. It varies with project size, complexity, and services provided. In general, the higher the construction cost the lower the fee percentage. Be sure to ask your architect what is and what is not included.

Lump Sum / Fixed Fee. Commonly used when there is an expected outcome and the time to complete the work may be calculated. Be sure you fully understand the parameters and what additional fees may be charged if the parameters change.

Combination. It is common to use some combination of the above methods depending on the phase of the project and services provided.

How much do builders (general contractors) charge? Residential contractors typically build into their cost estimates a fixed fee or percentage of construction cost from 15% to 30%. Some have additional charges for supervision and overhead. It's important for all parties to discuss the fees and pricing methods before signing a contract. Your architect should review the builder's contract.



BUDGETING THE PROJECT

Controlling the budget. Whether your budget is six hundred thousand or three million, you should discuss with your architect strategies to control costs.

One way to immediately impact the cost is to build less. Smaller spaces can be made to feel large through a few design tricks. Discuss with your architect ways to get the most out of your budget.

Having a thorough set of architectural drawings is another way to help control unknown conditions during construction. When your contractor knows at the start what will be built, costly delays and changes during construction are minimized. Try to make all design decisions before construction begins, it gets very expensive to change your mind later.

In both design and construction it is generally true that you get what you pay for. *The bitterness of poor quality remains long after the sweetness of low price is forgotten.*



DESIGN & CONSTRUCTION PROCESS

We believe that architecture is about people, and few opportunities are more personal than the custom design of a home. Our relationship with clients is a continuous conversation. We listen inquisitively to their needs and desires. From conversation arises core questions that the design responds to. Together, we reveal the home's essence through the choreography of space, views, materials and light.

Concept Design: We work with you to craft a unique design idea (concept) that will help guide the project. We will be simultaneously studying your needs and desires, the flow of rooms and spaces, connections to the outside, the path of the sun, and the construction budget. Simple diagrams will be presented that will easily explain three primary factors: Client Needs, Environmental Considerations, and Design Concepts.



Schematic Design: We work to refine the layout of spaces into a workable floor plan while simultaneously shaping the exterior shape of the home. We will be exploring the location and sizing of windows and doors, and exterior cladding materials. We will present plans, a three-dimensional digital model and a walk-through animation of the home. At the completion of Schematic Design, basic plans, an exterior rendering, and an accompanying data sheet for a singular design will be prepared for preliminary pricing by a Contractor.

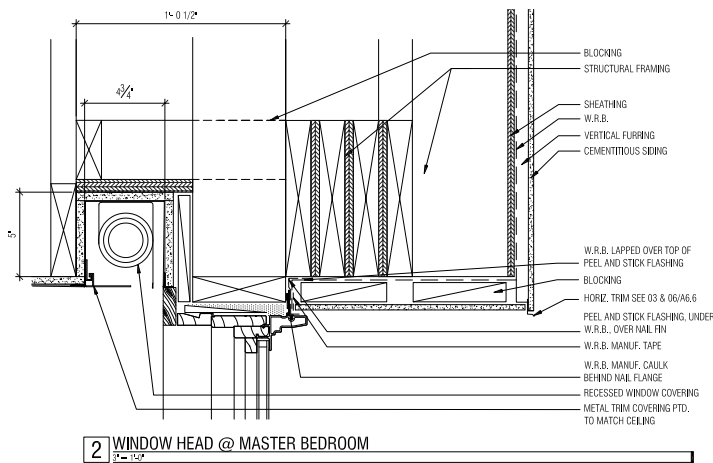
Concurrent with our architectural services are our interior design services. We create interior environments that are a natural extension of the architecture, with the belief that there should be no line where architecture ends and interiors begin. This practice seamlessly integrates a project's architectural forms and materials with the interior materials, lighting, cabinetry, built-ins, and the essences of home.



Contractor Selection: The Schematic Design drawings will be used to solicit preliminary pricing from contractors to check the budget. We have relationships with many contractors and will you select the right one based upon their responses to our contractor questionnaire, preliminary pricing, client and architect references, and an interview with you. This phase will help check the budget assumptions and direction before proceeding.

Interiors: The open market can be a daunting place of choices and options if you're not familiar with it. We'll quiz you on your likes and dislikes, and then review options with you for appliances, plumbing fixtures, cabinets, and finishes to create a cohesive experience. Like our 3D animations, we can model finish options to help you compare and visualize everything together!

Construction Documents: This phase is where we take refined design and all the decisions made and turn them into instructional drawings to build the project. Every essential material and detail is defined and specified. These drawings include rigorous detail: architectural and structural plans, sections, elevations, door and window schedules, and specifications. Refining every inch, inside and out, is an arduous task and requires keen attention to detail. For this reason, the Construction Documents Phase is quite time-consuming, and we ask you to bear with us while we nit-pick the little details that we promise will make all the difference in the end.



Construction Phase: Our team works on your behalf to ensure your investment in design is executed properly in construction. We do this by making regular site visits to observe the phases of construction, from foundations and systems to finishes. During each visit we meet with your builder and subcontractors to address any questions, review work, and plan ahead. In addition, we review important material orders to ensure compliance, as well as the contractor's monthly payment request to ensure the work to date has been satisfactorily installed. Construction is labor intensive, it involves more than two-dozen companies (subcontractors, suppliers, and fabricators) and hundreds of people over the course of the build. As the architect, having created the drawings and specifications, we're in the best position to help everyone understand them and see around the corner to know what's coming next. Our involvement helps reduce errors, solve any issues quickly, and protect your investment in design. Toward the end of construction we will help create a list of any items to be completed or fixed prior to final payment to the contractor and move-in.

Move in! You get to enjoy your new custom home, designed to fit your lifestyle and property. Our aim is for you to find a new sense of wonder and peace in your everyday routines for years to come. Here's what some of our clients have said one year after move in.

"ThoughtCraft earned our trust enough to push our ideas beyond our thoughts about how things ought to be and gave us something remarkable." – Joe

"I really love it, the house is my art, I would do it again!" - Lisa

"The house is amazing - worth the wait!" - Debbie

"I still wake up every day and think, oh my gosh, I live here! It's such a different living experience, it's light, it's open, it's inviting and welcoming and connected to the outdoors. Everything fits together and speaks to each other. There's a sense of belonging and tranquility for everything, and that creates a sense of sanctuary, which is really wonderful." – Allison



THOUGHTCRAFT ARCHITECTS

ThoughtCraft is an award-winning full-service architecture and interior design studio. Our name reflects our mission to create thoughtful and well-crafted architecture that enhances the human experience. Our goal is to create sustainable places that connect people to their surroundings.

Inspired by each clients unique character and vision, our work gives form to lifestyles

Co-founding partners Chris Johns and Jason Hart have deep roots - having studied at MIT and worked together in architecture since 1996. Our team approach and talent has garnered more than 25 prestigious design awards and has been showcased in more than 40 publications. We are focused on crafting living experiences that bring a sense of joy to your everyday.

To learn more visit www.thoughtcraftarchitects.com or contact us at studio@thoughtcraftarchitects.com to schedule a free consultation.



Applied curiosity from thought... to craft.