

## **Designing Your Home: Rules of Engagement**

This is in the category of “client orientation.” My years in residential design have yielded some philosophical insights and approaches which, while not profound, are required to have a successful project.

### **1 – Have Fun.**

Designing and building a major project is a dream come true. There is no reason that all members of the team shouldn't be drinking champagne on the front porch when the house is complete. Clear communications and managing realistic expectations are key.

### **2 – You Can't Hatch An Egg With A Blowtorch**

Good design is an iterative process. You can't get from A to Z without B, C, D, etc.

### **3 – Don't let “perfect” be the enemy of “good.”**

We all operate on the myth that there is ALWAYS a better version of something, better product, better color, etc. And there MIGHT be...but no one has infinite time. Work hard to get a really good solution...and then, as the Rasta's say: “be happy.”

### **4 – You Will Always Get My Honest Opinion**

My deal with clients is that I will always give you my professional opinion...with as much objectivity as possible. But...because it is YOUR home and YOUR money, you get the last word and my feelings will not be hurt when you say: “thank you for your opinion...but we still want to paint the exterior of the house electric periwinkle.”

### **5 – Plan For 90% Of Your Daily Life**

Churches aren't designed for Easter Sunday...so don't get too hung up on designing features into your home that will rarely be used. If you have 25 people for dinner ONLY at Thanksgiving, but it's 4 of you for 364 days a year, make a right-sized dining room and call Ducky' Bob's Rental for some extra tables in November.

### **6 – Be Real About Your Daily Life**

Designing a home is a chance to realize dreams. But there is also an element of romanticism and idealism that doesn't fit reality. Don't spend 10 grand and torture the design to force a balcony onto the Master Bedroom suite because you have visions of drinking coffee and leisurely reading the paper every morning...when in reality, most of the time you are scrambling to get kids to school and prepare for an 8:30 meeting. And...if you DO savor your coffee...wouldn't you rather do it in the garden/pool area that you spent lots of good money on.

### **7 – Do Not Listen To Anyone Who Says “This Is Very Popular Right Now”**

Remember: avocado green and burnt orange were VERY popular in the 60's. You are spending too much on your home to be a slave to the current trends. Manufacturers and vendors of all kinds survive by changing styles and colors in order to get folks to renovate their homes with unreasonable frequency. The home design industry is probably second only to the fashion industry in planned obsolescence. “Timeless Design” is almost a cliché...but it IS something to strive for.

### **8 – Home Construction Is Not Aerospace Construction**

There are so many wonderful, hard working folks in the residential construction world. But...there is also a low barrier to entry and you have to work really hard to find the good folks. I call it the “Bubba-And-A-Truck syndrome”...where anyone with a pick-up truck can become a contractor. Selection of a good GC is key, but even the best GC's can struggle to get outstanding performance from ALL of their subs on every project. If Joe-The-Electrician's mother-in-law just went in for surgery, and he had to cover the kids...he won't be at your project that day.

### **9 – Everyone On The Team Should Respect Each Other's Time**

Very few of us make really good decisions really fast, or do really good work really fast. I want you to absorb the design decisions...and if, after a day or two you have second thoughts about something, you shouldn't feel guilty about changing your mind. Likewise, I struggle with the design decisions I want to show you...and sometimes that takes a bit more time and reflection. And...in the big scheme of the building process, paper is cheap...concrete, wood, and steel are not. Better to spend a bit more time working on paper refining the design, and then carefully selecting finishes BEFORE construction...and then the GC can construct in the most efficient manner possible.

### **10 – Something Is Going To Go Wrong**

We will do everything possible to avert surprises...in design, in specifications, in construction...BUT...something we are not thinking about will sneak up and bite us. We just don't know what it is until we see it. The window manufacturer who's low-e coating has a slightly green tint that didn't show up in the 4" sample, the building inspector who interpreted something differently from the previous dozen inspectors looking at the same building element, the cabinet guy who didn't notice you specified FSC-certified materials...that take 6 more weeks to get, the tile sub who just finished the shower the way he “always does it”...but didn't notice on the drawings that the installation was supposed to be a bit different than the usual. These things usually create freak-outs in the short run...but when blended in with the finished project, end up not being a huge deal...usually...

Okay...if you are comfortable with these guidelines, I'll put the champagne in the fridge so it will be ready when we need it.

Rob Raymond, AIA