



DESIGNWORKS ARCHITECTS, P.C.

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## How We Work – Step by Step

**Step 1. You have a need and call us.** Your business needs more space. Your industrial plant needs retrofitting. You want to build a new home. You love your house, but need more space. Your kitchen drives you crazy. Whatever your architectural problem, you've thought about it long enough. Now you want to solve it. You have some ideas, but aren't sure how to go about translating them into bricks and mortar. You pick up the phone and dial our number.

**Step 2. We have our first of many meetings.** We sit down, your place or ours, and get to know each other. Mostly you'll talk. We'll listen, take notes – and ask questions, lots of questions. You'll tell us what you want to achieve and why. We'll discuss your needs, the issues that surround your project, and problems or obstacles to its completion. We'll gather information crucial to the formation of the program for your project. We'll discuss your budget, the scale of the project, your design ideas and set parameters. We'll get to know who you are, how you live or how your business is conducted. We'll talk about how you can take simple - or elaborate - steps to have a positive impact on the environment. And we'll talk about how that can help you save money in the long run. There will be plenty of back and forth, and probably a pot or two of coffee. By the end of this meeting, we'll know quite a bit about you and your expectations, and you'll have a good feel for us and our work dynamic.

**Step 3. We come up with an architectural program.** An architectural program is the organization and transformation into words of the information we gathered at our first meeting. We'll create a document with a comprehensive program that synthesizes and spells out your needs and how we'll go about meeting them. We deliver it to you. You review it, and let us know if it's accurate and acceptable. You approve the program and we move on to step four.

**Step 4. We produce schematic designs.** This is where we get to be creative and start crafting a vision of your project. At this step we factor in everything we've already learned from you. If you're doing new construction, we do a codes check and a site analysis, including views, solar opportunities, environmental constraints, soil conditions, topography, boundaries, setback requirements,

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and zoning. If your project involves renovations to an existing building, we'll take measurements, check codes and consider the environmental impact of your changes. In either case, we'll consider sustainable opportunities to improve the environmental quality and to produce a more pleasant environment for you. We compile all of this information and come up with one or more schematic designs, i.e., simple, quickly-drawn sketches that demonstrate solutions to your problems. They won't have the abundance of specific detail that your final drawings will. They are drawn on tracing paper, so we can do overlays to show you how they differ and so we can easily adjust them when we get your feedback. Think of them as visual brainstorms.

**Step 5. We meet again and review the schematics.** This is the fun stage. We've digested the information culled from the last meeting. We present the refined schematic design options and you react. There's a lot of exciting energy at this meeting because you finally see concrete ideas addressing your issues. It sparks your creative juices and we brainstorm, amending some of the drawings, quickly sketching up new ideas as they emerge. You might remember some requirements or preferences you hadn't mentioned before. We adjust the schematics. By the end of this meeting, you might fix on one of the options, or come up with a direction that is a combination of various options. Once we've established a direction, we move onto the next step. We'll also come up with some preliminary estimates of probable costs at this step.

**Step 6. We develop the design.** Now we take the design direction we've agreed on and begin the process of firming up and refining the plan. At this stage we get your design onto the computer, so when we meet next you'll have some good-looking, computer-generated (CAD) drawings to review. There may be many phone calls back and forth as we pin this down.

**Step 7. We meet, review and finalize the design.** Now you get to look at a more official version of your emerging design. But at this point, nothing is set in stone. We meet to review and tinker. Does it meet your expectations? Are the spaces big enough? If you have trouble visualizing the design we do whatever it takes to make it clear. We'll draw plans (scale drawings), elevations (vertical views of a building, inside or out), sections (profile of an area as if it were cut through), or perspectives (drawing that shows depth or distance). We'll produce models - computerized or actual 3-D miniatures, if it helps. We'll do anything to convey a thorough understanding of your design. This may happen in one meeting or over the course of several. Once we finalize the design, we'll discuss materials, finishes and colors. We'll guide you through each tier of decision-making.

**Step 8. We produce construction drawings and specifications.** After we've nailed everything down, we produce an official set of very detailed drawings

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that we'll use for bidding, code approvals and actual construction. The bidding process can be handled a couple of ways. A *competitive bid* is when we submit the drawings to several interested contractors. They scrutinize the drawings and submit a bid, a price to do your job. It's up to you, with our help, to choose one of them. Or you can do a *negotiated bid*. That is a price negotiated with a single contractor after he reviews the drawings. This contractor may have come recommended to you or you may already know him. We can recommend reputable and reliable contractors. With a negotiated bid, the contractor can be brought in early to become part of the team and help with decisions about construction systems and finishes. No matter which bidding approach you choose, we work with you throughout this complicated process. If the bids come in over your budget, we make it work, whether it's reworking the design, thinking through areas to cut or working with the contractor to shave off costs.

**Step 9. Construction begins.** By this stage everything is finalized and construction begins. We observe construction throughout the course of the project and work with the contractor to make sure the quality and execution conform to the design and drawings.

**Step 10. You move into your new space.** All your hard work comes to fruition. Now you get to inhabit the new space, enjoy your beautiful, high-performance results and the admiration of everyone who steps into it. The design process is a long one. There will be times when you are overwhelmed with decision-making. But the outcome of this collaborative effort to create a tailor-made, ingenious and sustainable solution to your problems is ultimately exhilarating. In the end, standing in your new space, you'll look around and enjoy the quiet thrill of a perfect fit.