

# Final schematic design invaluable to bid process



Some readers have asked me to follow a project from the beginning to illustrate the entire process with its inherent ups and downs. I thought it was a great idea, so in discussing a series of ever-changing topics related to architecture and construction we will follow the design and construction of a "custom" home which is on the boards at my office. A month or so back I began reporting on the progress of this project and I will continue to have monthly updates as the project progresses.

Schematic design was finally completed last week. Admittedly it took two to three weeks longer than expected to finish the work for this phase. Between the holidays and vacation time and procrastination as well as the sheer magnitude of the project I fell behind - it is after all a piece of art and very difficult to predict absolute completion times. I always feel that it is OK if things take longer than expected as long as those providing the services are working diligently to complete their obligations and the quality is at least as good as expected. For me, schematic design is completed at the final schematic design meeting and it is at this meeting that a final model is presented to the clients for their approval. Depending on the size of the project, this model is usually made out of wood and is in itself a work of art requiring 60-80 hours of time to fabricate. It is built to scale and is an extremely accurate depiction of the actual project. Along with the model comes a set of final floor plans and elevations. The

meeting turn out to be casual as the final meeting involves very little speculation on my part. Typically my clients are enthralled by imagining themselves occupying their new project. Sometimes friends of the clients are at these meetings and everyone has a good time.

At the close of the first phase, the simple schematic design documents begin to be distributed for bid, loan and structural purposes. The structural engineer can begin to look at spans and unusual conditions - although they prefer to use 1/4" = 1'-0" documents for their work. NBD is providing construction financing for the project and needs to review the project as well as the preliminary specifications for the project - the schematic drawings will suffice for this purpose. Some of the bidders on the project can get the information they need from the schematic drawings in order to supply bids on

the project - examples include window and door manufacturers as well as the redwood and cypress suppliers for the exterior skin. Plumbing bids can be received by combining the schematic drawings along with a complete written spec of the fixtures which are to be utilized.

With the close of the schematic design phase I have, I've immediately into the design development phase. Here, the drawings are immediately enlarged to 1/4" = 1'-0" which means that one fourth of an inch measured from the drawing equals one foot in reality. Walls can now be drawn accurately and windows can have their mullions sized properly, etc. Many of the intricacies which a project has are realized and some can be resolved. Dimensions can be realized and something almost hard to describe happens as the project takes a huge jump towards reality. By the comple-

tion of this phase, there will be plans, elevations and sections as well as structural and electrical drawings. The specifications will be 90% complete meaning that finishes, kitchen equipment and plumbing finishes will be determined. From a design standpoint because the schematic phase was so extensive there is little to resolve at the large scale.

Professionally, I am 95 percent satisfied with the project and for me that is quite high - as you may have noticed I am demanding of others as well as of myself. The problem is that the dining room seems a touch too long - perhaps the proper furniture choice would take care of the problem. Is a 12-15 foot long dining room table too long? This project will not utilize the services of an interior designer but maybe I can convince the client that this piece of furniture is absolutely necessary. So at this point all is well with

the client-architect relationship. The critical determinant of this is the client's satisfaction with the design of the project. Obviously at this point in time there are no cost overruns so other than the design and the client's approval of such, not much else can upset the balance. If one has chosen one's architect with care, all should be great. If on the other hand at the close of schematic design one is not happy I would quickly read through the contract and exit now rather than later because it only gets more and more expensive as one moves into the next phase.

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