

# Architect manages construction for this home



STEVEN SIVAK

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 addition to discussing a series of ever-changing topics related to architecture and construction, we are following the design and

construction of a "custom" home, which is on the boards at my office. Two months ago I began reporting on the progress of this project, and I will continue to have monthly updates as the project progresses.

The end of March, which is our proposed date for the beginning of construction, is fast approaching. Design development, which is the second phase of an architectural project, was completed in about one month and included framing plans, which were prepared by the structural engineer.

ings also included electrical plans, electrical fixture specifications and plumbing specifications. One of the major differences between the design development drawings and the schematic design drawings, which was the first phase, is that these drawings were prepared at a scale of 1/4" = 1'-0" while the schematic drawings were done at 1/8" = 1'-0". This means that the drawings are twice the size. Other parts of the house have been drawn to a larger scale including bathrooms and kitchen

1" = 1'-0" and detail areas are drawn to 3" = 1'-0".

The major news is that in addition to being the architect for the project, I will also be acting as the general contractor for the project. I have done this a few times in the past, and it works very well for the client. A level of trust has been established during the architectural phases that would have to be established for a builder - why bother? More important, I know the project better than anyone and why not just be the builder?

reading these articles, I like things done a certain way, and as the builder I am in a better position to get that level of quality out of the sub-contractors than if I were one step removed from the action as the architect. This is a big undertaking to assume this role - a good builder puts a lot of time in to getting this kind of project built, and if it were not such a special project, I would not have the desire to assume this role.

So in addition to drawing the design development and working drawings, I am also putting certain parts of the project out to bid as the drawings for them are complete. For example the plumbing system can be bid based upon having accurate but not final drawings, specifications and a fixture list. The same is true for the electrical system, floor finishes, doors/hardware, kitchen appliances, heating/cooling, well and septic, windows, drywall and paint.

The proper term for my involvement during the construction phase is "construction manager." This is a term that I am seeing more and more often and while the CM is similar to a general contractor/builder, the CM does not risk capital to build your project. Basically the CM gets a fee (either a percentage or a fixed fee) for his services and places such fee on top of his costs for doing the work.

The advantage to the homeowner is that it is unnecessary to pad costs to cover small items that can be forgotten. The downside is that the homeowner will not know the final costs of the project until the project is finished. Because most homeowners do not have complete drawings with complete specifications, it is very hard for general contractors to give guaranteed maximum pricing on projects.

CMs, like architects, charge for their time and do not typically bid on jobs without signed contracts from prospective clients. From my point of view, the use of construction managers makes lots of sense for building custom projects.

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## Revival of interest in American garden

After a period of eclipse, there's been an upsurge of interest in America's gardens.

Just in the last decade or so we've come to see the bid come in and adjust the final drawings to reflect the level of detail that can be afforded by the client. A perfect example of this is the preliminary window pricing, which was about \$3,000 higher than I was looking for - working with

being brought to light by the Library of American Landscape History, comes across as a true artist," Anne Raver writes in an article in the New York Times about the exhibition.

Karson says the library's goal is to preserve the country's gardens as part of Americans' cultural heritage.

When gardens like those of Shipman are restored and can be reopened to the public, "It's very exciting to see something once inaccessible now playing a role again in the lives of thousands of garden visitors," Karson said.

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