



# How to Add, Remodel or Renovate Your Home

New York State

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A Design Brief is a document or series of lists, images, and/or notes that tells the story, “Why I want to design a new Addition, remodel or renovate an existing home, and/or add additional interior space to an existing area of the home.” It may include your concerns and even questions that may arise from that long process of your thoughts, ever since you have decided to think about the dream project.





Adding on, Remodeling or Renovating an existing home can and should be an exciting, engaging and rewarding experience. However, we can be confronted with stories from friends and relatives, yes even contractors about not having their wishes heard. This can lead to misunderstandings between contractors, the owner and the professional licensed designer such as the architect on what exactly was the agreed scope of work and budget. This document is set up to guide you along the process necessary to prepare you for your project and prevent this common problem.

### 1. Start by creating a Design Brief

A good working relationship with your licensed design professional/architect is based on open, honest communication. This starts with a design brief that helps architects clarify and understand your expectations, preferences, wants, needs, aspirations and lifestyle. If the brief is not clear, this misinformation to the design professional will follow on through to the contractor and all his associated tradesman, compromising your project. They will struggle to understand what it is they need to allow for in the pricing of your project and the fulfillment of your needs.

### 2. Your Site (Property)

Really scrutinize your site and get a real feel of it. Where is the sun – in summer and winter? Where are the views you want to enjoy every day and those you want to exclude? Where are the surrounding homes, other buildings and trees you may or may not want to see? Which parts of the site are most/least noisy? Does the site have a slope to it? Have your title report, parcel map, and other legal documents that describe your property ready to share with your architect. Ask the architect for referrals to get a topographic survey. Any new home, or addition on an existing home in the area will require a site drawing, that at minimum locates property lines, existing structures, setbacks, utility poles, manholes, water shut-offs and cleanouts, etc..



A good working relationship with your design professional is based on continued open, honest communication

### 3. Spaces

#### *Indoor Spaces*

A good design can transform the way that we live. Think hard about your families current and future needs. Map out your daily routine. How many people live in the house? How old are they? Who does What, Where? Don't forget your children's rapidly changing needs! Do you want to 'zone' spaces, separate family members, functions and/or pets? Consider the number of floors, rooms and other spaces and describe their use. Make a list of who needs rooms to sleep, work, cook and relax in. Where do you cook and eat? Is the kitchen a constant thoroughfare for teenagers and large family gatherings? Is your lifestyle formal, casual, relaxed or active? Do you need spaces to entertain at home – indoor and outdoor? What type of entertainment do you want to include such as music, television, projector or areas for storage of equipment? List any special requirements you have such as accessibility, extra storage areas, garage loft space, built-in furniture or shelving, lifts, generators, home office. What method of heating do you prefer? What do other family members think about and want from the whole project?



#### *Outdoor Spaces*

What do you want to do outdoors? Entertain? Relax? Play? Swim? Supervise Children? Grow enough vegetables to be self-sufficient? Do you want a high or low maintenance scheme? What features are important and of interest to you?

Think about the indoor/outdoor flow of spaces, where the morning sun lands, where you would be exposed to and sheltered from the wind. Have you always dreamt of an exterior fireplace or outdoor kitchen? Think of your external areas as outdoor rooms, and consider privacy and connections between spaces. Listing your thoughts will help both you and your design professional quickly understand your priorities. Create a list of the rooms and space you want.

### 4. Design mood and feeling

To some, this may seem frivolous, but this is important. This is your home, where your children and other loved ones are, where they're going to grow up and you're going to have all your family memories. Think about the emotions you want to feel in your new home. Do you want it to be bold, low-key, industrial, traditional, rustic, minimalized, contemporary, modern or organic? Think about your feelings – yes really! For example, what is your favorite time of day?

Do you worry about shutting the curtains to protect the furniture from the sun, or do you like to enjoy coffee on the terrace? Is curling up with a good book your favorite hobby, or is it taking the dog for a walk no matter what the weather? Describe spaces, design features and styles that appeal to you and those that don't. Create a scrapbook, a file (physical or online) of fabric swatches, photographs, magazine clippings and anything else that can help your architect understand who you are, how you live and what you want from your project. Use web-based photo sites such as Houzz or Pinterest and others to assemble and share your ideas.

### 5. Details, Appliances and Gadgets

List major appliances you already own or are considering buying and any preferences you have about where you want to put them. Do you really want that refrigerator next to your double oven (really not a good idea)? Do you have lots of gadgets that need outlets in your island? Is your washing machine on long periods of time, and



do you want your drying and ironing space right next to it? These details can make a big difference to the way your kitchen and utility space is planned and functions. Note and discuss major pieces of furniture or artwork you want to showcase with your architect so he can fit them into the spaces with proper lighting for them in the new dream space.

### 6. Sketching

If possible, sketch out your thoughts, but don't get too caught up in them or try to detail them. If the work involves altering an existing home, you'll be constrained by the existing structure, services and if it is a registered historic building, there will be lots of limitations on what you can change. However, still let your imagination flow and present your thoughts to your architect, but be open to suggestions from him/her and communicate back and forth.

### 7. Materials

List materials you like and dislike (inside and out), but be aware that your budget will be a determining factor in your final choices. Do you have any specific wall, ceiling and floor finishes in mind? Do you like smooth or textured stucco, wood siding, aluminum or masonry? Stone, slate, glass, steel, vinyl, engineered wood ... the list is endless. Wood, vinyl, aluminum or fiberglass windows? Much will depend on the style of home, but there are choices to be made that will determine how much you spend on maintenance in the long run.

#### The Reasons I Want To Renovate My Home:

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_
- d. \_\_\_\_\_
- e. \_\_\_\_\_

- f. \_\_\_\_\_
- g. \_\_\_\_\_
- h. \_\_\_\_\_
- i. \_\_\_\_\_
- j. \_\_\_\_\_





## 8. Sustainability and Energy Efficiency

Regulation and rising energy costs are making “green” design an essential consideration and expense to new home projects. There are now minimum requirements of performance set by national and local government codes and regulations to design and build your next dream home project, new or existing. Your design professional will know all about these and will discuss with you how ‘green’ you need, want and can be. There are lots of renewable energy solutions – such as solar panels, ground source heat pumps, rainwater harvesting, wind power to name but a few. Although these add costs upfront, some can save you money in the long run. Much will depend on your budget and how long you plan to live in the home after the work has been done.

## 9. Timetable

Think about and share with your design professional key target dates that are important to you. When do you want to start and finish the project? Keep in mind that, as a rule of thumb and depending on the size of your project, it could take up to 3-5 months to agree to an approved design, to prepare construction documents and to obtain a building permit before construction can commence. You are less likely to be disappointed if you allow at least 6-12 months for work on existing homes to be completed and 12-18 months for new homes.

## 10. Budget

It is very important to ask yourself what it is you think you want and just how much you are willing to pay for it. That way you are slowly elaborating your brief into more detail. Share your budget with your architect. Begin looking for sources to finance your project and keep 5-10% contingency aside to give you flexibility. Your architect can also help you determine a budget and work with you to ensure that your vision aligns, with that budget.

It is very important to ask yourself what it is you think you want and just how much you are willing to pay for it. That way you are slowly elaborating your brief into more detail.

**Other sample questions to ask:**

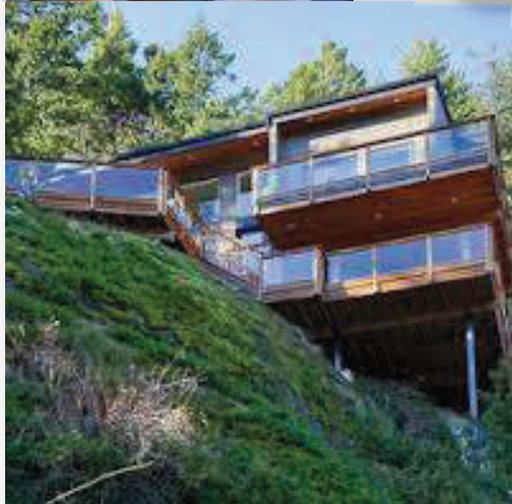
The following is a series of questions that will further Elaborate on your brief .....

- Who will live in your home now and in the future?*
- How long do you plan to live in this home?*
- What different new activities will you need to Accommodate for?*
- How do you want your home to fit with its existing environment?*
- Are there any health and safety issues you need to take into account?*
- What would you really like to live in?*
- Do you have large parties or small family gatherings?*
- Do you need to upgrade your water heating system?*

- Do you travel a lot?*
- What do you want your home interior to look like?*
- What colors will it have?*
- Do you want a total makeover or a staged process?*
- How much sunlight and artificial light?*
- What facilities for cooling and heating do you want?*
- Do you want to install or upgrade existing security and/or audio systems?*
- Do you want landscaping and outdoor lighting?*



**What would you really like to live in?  
What features will it have?**



## The Stages of An Architectural Project

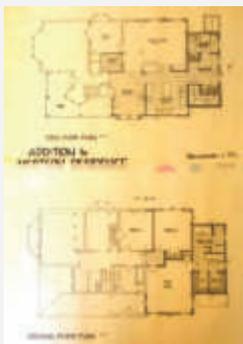
Every design, remodel, addition and construction project will progress at its own pace. But there are stages that are consistent throughout the construction industry that you can count on. These reflect the following:

### Pre-Design



Before the design starts, you and the architect will discuss and review your design brief you have created. The architect shall review your requirements and acquire the programming ideas, budgets, timetables, financing and fee arrangements for the project. A scope of work will be developed and a written proposal or legal contract drawn up to define the work you will require of the architect. Further discussion of municipal codes and property regulations will be considered to define more detail of the project. The architect will obtain property information from owners, such as a property or mortgage survey map. Much of this research is the first step to a successful design and is referred to as “The Needs and Options Review” (NOR) in the Process.. Please review with your architect for completing.

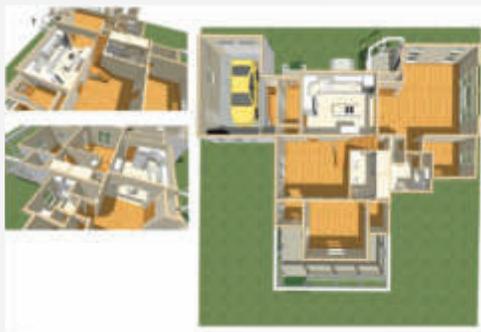
### Preliminary Design Schematics



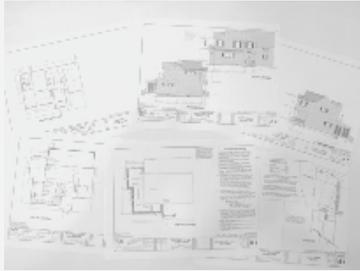
This is the initial design stage where the architect takes your ideas and requirements and produces a couple of solutions that reflect your desired dreams. The architect analyzes the NOR from the first stage and sets up a time to acquire the necessary field dimensions and data to develop a set of as built drawings of the existing home and its conditions. These drawings will be used as a basis for the design of your addition, remodel or renovation to ensure the work will be suitably oriented to the existing home and its site. The architect shall begin with the basic elements and principals of design to program your ideas into a set of rough drawings that include plan footprints and a couple 2D exterior elevations as necessary to relay its concept. In addition the design professional through computer modeling will review the design in 3-dimensional overviews and walk-throughs to help you visualize the spaces developed.

These sketched ideas are presented with a careful study and technical experience in design and construction to assure there successful possibilities for construction.

Your architect will take an approved design and present a probable cost estimate of construction to try to adhere to, and fit the owner’s budget. This is where tweaking the design and possibly further design ideas may need to follow. This stage may have multiple revisions until the design suits your dream and expectations.



## Design Development



When you approve a final schematic design, the architect uses this stage to develop the design and general specifications further for the entire project. Your design professional will make minor changes as necessary, then fine tune the structural design of the home, its exterior finishes and amenities to carry through its functioning and final construction detailing. If fees allow, the mechanical and electrical systems are discussed and developed, room finishes, exterior finishes, doors and window materials scheduled and further fine detailing will be blocked and prepared. Plans are developed up to approximately 60% at this stage. This is the time to make any final adjustments, decisions and changes without incurring additional fees. This stage is a good time to review a set with the building permit department if necessary to be sure of its viability for a permit.

## Construction or Contract Documents and Specifications



Over the years people have referred to these as “Blueprints”. Architects refer to them as Construction Documents. Defined as, “Instruction manuals for an owner to acquire a building permit and for his contractor to use to construct the project designed and detailed for the project intended”. These are the drawings, drawn to scale, detailed and labeled throughout with a minimum set showing a Foundation Plan, Floor Plans (1 or 2 story), Exterior Elevations, Building and/or Wall Sections, generic or specific notes, plan and sectional details and schedules as necessary. In New York State, the Law requires that all plans, drawings and specifications relating to the construction or alteration of buildings and homes or structures which are to be filed with the local building official must be stamped with the seal of an Architect or Professional Engineer (Article 147, Section 7307). Keep in mind that, as a rule of thumb and depending on the size of your project, it could take up to 3-5 months to agree to an approved design, then prepare construction documents and to obtain a building permit before construction can commence. You are less likely to be disappointed if you allow at least 6-12 months for the entire design and construction work on existing homes to be completed and may be 12-18 months for new homes.

## Construction Bidding



Item	Description	Quantity	Unit	Price	Total
1000	Excavation	100	sq. yd.	10.00	1000.00
2000	Foundation	100	sq. ft.	20.00	2000.00
3000	Concrete	100	cu. yd.	30.00	3000.00
4000	Formwork	100	sq. ft.	40.00	4000.00
5000	Reinforcement	100	lb.	50.00	5000.00
6000	Brickwork	100	sq. ft.	60.00	6000.00
7000	Masonry	100	sq. ft.	70.00	7000.00
8000	Plumbing	100	hr.	80.00	8000.00
9000	Electrical	100	hr.	90.00	9000.00
10000	Painting	100	sq. ft.	100.00	10000.00
11000	Interior Finishes	100	sq. ft.	110.00	11000.00
12000	Exterior Finishes	100	sq. ft.	120.00	12000.00
13000	Roofing	100	sq. ft.	130.00	13000.00
14000	Insulation	100	sq. ft.	140.00	14000.00
15000	HVAC	100	sq. ft.	150.00	15000.00
16000	Lighting	100	hr.	160.00	16000.00
17000	Landscaping	100	hr.	170.00	17000.00
18000	Site Work	100	hr.	180.00	18000.00
19000	Permitting	100	hr.	190.00	19000.00
20000	Architectural	100	hr.	200.00	20000.00

This stage is performed only for Full Contract Document Services. Once the final Contract Drawings and Specifications (known as Contract Documents) are completed, stamped and signed by the architect, they are ready to disperse to the contractors for bidding. If your contract and fees are part of this service with your architect, he shall work with you to handle this phase of the project. It's the design professionals responsibility to see that the contractors pick up the full plans and specifications which are the basis both for competitive bidding and for the actual construction of the project. Each bidder must be able to compete equally and compare apples to apples. The bids will define the final budget for the work to be done for the plans presented. You and your architect will review the final bids, compare and make a decision whether to proceed with one of the bidders.

## Construction Administration



This stage is performed only for Full Contract Document Services. Once the bidding is over and you have awarded and signed a contract with a contractor, it is time to commence with the construction. During construction, your architect is a vital part of the construction team as your advocate and agent on the job. Unless you have experience and background in the construction field, you will want your architect to be available to review the progress of the project, answer technical and other questions from the contractor, and assist you in understanding requests for payments and change orders. Our firm allows our clients to customize how much involvement you need from us. We'll provide daily, weekly, bi-weekly, monthly monitoring or spot checks of the progress at your requests or the contractors.

## Evaluating and Qualifying Architects

The first thing you should ask when meeting an architect, is actually find out if he/she are really a licensed Architect in the State you are building in: What?

The general public doesn't really know this, but most homes are not actually designed by an architect and it is easy to parade around and falsely state that you are an architect in the State of New York. If you were to get caught, it's a misdemeanor and rarely results punishment greater than a small fine. In our State, you may only call yourself an architect if you are licensed in New York State.

New York State does not require an architect to design a home or a single family residential project, however it does require an architect or engineer stamp and signature on the drawings. In order for them to place their stamp on the drawing, they shall take the responsibility for the drawings and follow up with a letter to that effect. Thus, many municipalities require an architect or engineer to provide drawings, stamped and signed.



New York State requires architects or engineers stamp on homes over 1500 square feet, and additions or remodeling in excess of \$10,000 to build. It is or recommendation that you contact your municipality to find out their regulations for acquiring a building permit just as a precaution.

**"Check the license of the architects you are evaluating  
at the New York State Architects Board**

In New York State, licensing requires a minimum of a Masters degree in Architecture (5 years), minimum of 3 years of experience in the field and office with a licensed architect, and passing a very rigorous exam. The time it takes to gain experience and pass the exam approaches 10 years!

So why would you hire an architect to design your home or residential project, if the State or your local municipality doesn't require you to have one? Well, an architect is the only design professional, who is



qualified with an extensive educational background, properly acquired internships, rigorous licensing examinations, years of exhaustive practical experience at times hands-on, continuous educational career requirements, that has the training, background and knowledge, building design expertise, the ability to visualize a design of your residence or buildings, and whom is budget minded, energy conscious, looks out for your interests and needs, deals with the construction industry everyday, and guides you through construction to make that house a home or a building to function and work in. that works.

Homes are actually complicated and a balance between the practical and the beautiful. Your new home is also likely to be your largest investment. It seems to be wiser to hire someone that's highly qualified to protect your assets and property.

So check the license of the architects you are evaluating at the New York State Architects Board.

Once a license is confirmed, pick an architect that you feel you can trust, is listening to your needs and wants, your wishes, and has experience completing residential building designs or projects that seem to catch your eye. It is likely that you will be working with the architect for a long time in order to achieve your goal. Trusting your instinct and verifying qualifications are valuable tools in your final selection.

**It is important to find a general contractor who is professional, qualified and ready to build your dream project**

### **Finding a Qualified General Contractor to Build your new Project**

It is very likely that your architect has been helping clients get their dream homes for many years, thus has formed long and valuable relations with local contractors that he/she trusts and will perform quality work and keep open communication during construction. Communication is key to a successful project and you should ask your architect for recommendations of builders in your area:

Ask your architect for a list of contractors and his/her list of questions to ask them so you may verify each one's qualifications during your review with them. The licensed general contractor will be the person you will see and be interactive with nearly every day through the course of the construction. You want to make sure that this person is someone you trust and that you feel comfortable having vital discussions and like to have around. Most municipalities in New York State do not require General Contractors to be licensed but we recommend that you verify this with your local building department early in the design stages of your project.



## The Next Step to a Successful Project

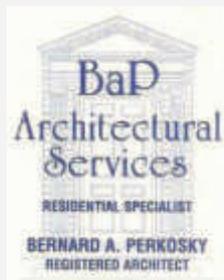
You now have the tools and the key to information that is designed to help you lay out your foundation to that successful residential remodeling or addition project you have been contemplating for several months to start.

Because each residential project is unique, and the requirements differ based on a multitude of factors, such as style of home and more, I'm unable to possibly include every important piece of information about preparing for your design of that remodel or addition successfully into this small guide.

To help you wade through the necessary requirements and process of design, to research your feasibility for a successful outcome and make sure you are not overlooking any crucial factor that could place a monkey's wrench into your plans and doom the project, I would like to invite you to "Ask The Architect" or even better, set up an appointment for a one hour consultation with me to discuss your ideas more thoroughly. This way I can help you assess if your needs and wishes are feasible and put you on a path toward a viable solution to your remodel and/or Addition to your home project.

Please feel free to email me at [baparch@hancock.net](mailto:baparch@hancock.net) to schedule an appointment and/or visit our web site to schedule one through the "Ask The Architect" educational resource. If you would like to talk, call (607) 748-2038

Best wishes for the success of your project.  
Bernie Perkosky, RA, AIA



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Second Floor Roof Raising, Screen porch and Gazebo addition

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