

Design First: 7 Key Steps Before You Build Your Dream Home

A helpful guide for property owners planning a custom build.



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Why This Guide Matters...

Before You Break Ground, Get a Clear Design Roadmap.

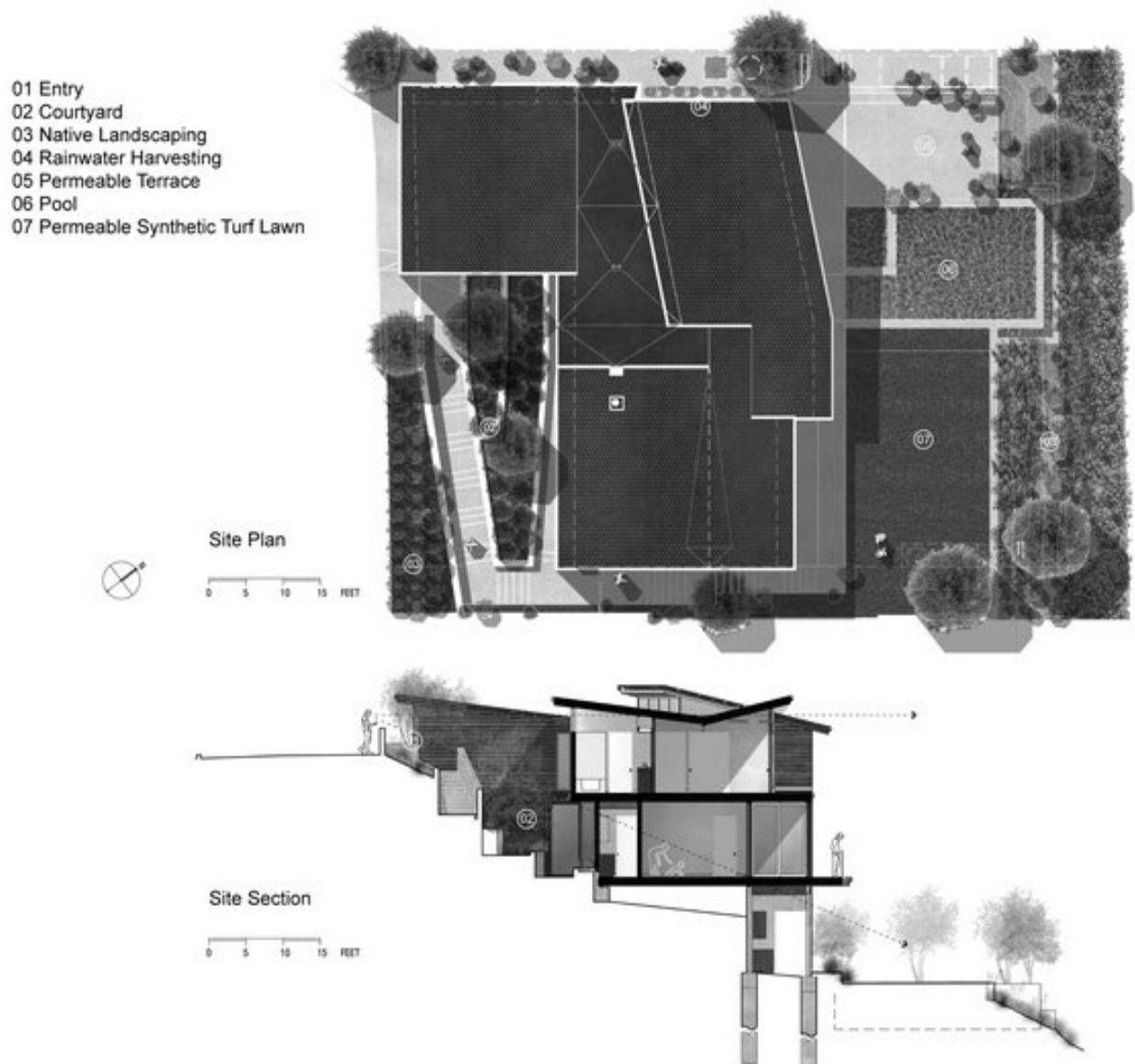
Building a new home is exciting — but also full of big decisions. The best projects don't start with a contractor — they start with a plan. This guide will walk you through the most important early steps in the process, show you how design and planning affect cost and outcome, and explain why working with an architect sets your project up for success.



Step 1 — Understand Your Site

Every property has its own rules and potential. Zoning, topography, views, and sunlight all play a role. Hiring an architect early helps you unlock the site's potential and avoid costly surprises.

✂ Pro Tip: Even if your land is “buildable,” it may come with restrictions.



Step 2 — Clarify Your Priorities

Think function first: How do you want to live? Consider layout, lifestyle, and future flexibility. Start collecting inspiration (Pinterest, Houzz, your favorite homes).

✂ Pro Tip: Clear priorities = better design and more accurate budgets.



Step 3 — Know What You Can Spend

Align scope with budget from the start. Include soft costs (design, engineering, permits) as well as construction. Architects can provide early cost range guidance before hiring a builder.

✂ Pro Tip: Rushing to get a builder bid without a design usually leads to sticker shock.



Step 4 — Design Comes in Phases

Schematic Design → Design Development → Construction Drawings
Each phase builds upon the last to refine the vision and details. This process allows you to make key decisions *before* you spend on construction.

✂ Pro Tip: The design phase typically takes 2–4 months. Plan ahead.



Step 6 — Choose the Right Builder

Architects can help you interview and vet builders. Some clients use competitive bidding; others select a contractor early (Design-Build). Either way, clear drawings = better pricing and fewer change orders.

✂ Pro Tip: Pick based on *fit* and *communication*, not just cost.



Step 7 — Expect the Unexpected (and Plan for It)

Site surprises, weather delays, decision changes — they happen. Contingency budgets (5–15%) help reduce stress. A strong architect-client-builder team keeps things on track.

✂ Pro Tip: Flexibility and communication are just as important as design.



Our Role as Your Architect


We visualize your goals and bring them to life. We guide you through permits, zoning, design, and builder selection. We advocate for your interests from start to finish.



Want to talk through your property or project idea?
Let's schedule a free consultation to see what's possible.

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