

Archetype Design Frequently Asked Questions

How do we start the design process?

If you haven't purchased your building site yet, have me check it out first and make sure there are no problems with it. If you've bought one already, I need to evaluate the site *with you* and see what you most like about it. You might want to see some of my work as well – all of which gives us some time together to size each other up and see if we are a good fit. The next step is to fill out the Design Questionnaire, which basically asks what you want to build and what you want to spend. I'll take that information and see if your budget and desires are on track...we'll adjust one or both in order to arrive at a final project description and preliminary budget...and that provides the basis for my Design Agreement.

How much do you charge?

My fees are described on the template for my Design Agreement which you are probably receiving with this FAQ sheet.

How long does the design process take?

Depending on the complexity of the project, 3-6 months is a good timeline. We don't want to go so fast that we miss things, but neither do we want to drag the design out too long and lose momentum and excitement. The stages of design are described in my Design Proposal. The initial work begins rather slowly, but as we approach construction the pace can become feverish. Please note that I always give top priority to projects under construction, where money is being made or lost. If the backhoe is running and the builder needs me onsite, I drop everything and help out.

When can you start work?

Often I am so booked that I can't start new work for six months. Signing an agreement with a deposit check gets you on my schedule. One benefit of meeting, evaluating the site and doing the questionnaire in advance is that I actually start working on your project subconsciously, which is how the creative process works anyway.

How often will we have to meet?

Every project and every client is different. Certainly I've communicated entirely by fax, e-mail, and FedEx - but it's better to meet several times during the design. The same is true of construction: some clients hardly ever show up, while others want to be there every day. I do it your way.

What else do you need from us?

Once the questionnaire and Design Agreement are behind us, I'll need:

- A current survey on disc or e-mailed, and clearly marked property corners.
- All applicable CC&R's (restrictive covenants)
- All architectural restrictions.
- Legal description and warranty deed

In some cases, I may need:

- A topographical survey (when slope exceeds 5%).
- A soils test (in the case of unusual or unstable soils and slopes)
- An engineering review (if the structural features exceed my comfort zone).
- A visit from a water witch.

Please note that any such tests or consulting must be pre-authorized by you as described in the "Reimbursables" page of my Design Agreement

What if we get started and don't like your work?

Fire me! There's a termination clause in the Design Agreement. It's only happened twice in all these years – once during design and once during construction, and I think each case was due mostly to personality conflict.

What about the ideas in your book?

Archetype Design was written in 1999 in a wonderful burst of creative inspiration. The ideas are definitely not for everyone, and I myself am currently absorbed in grounding that vision and making it less heady and more practical. You can see that in my *Su Casa* articles. Certainly my basic approach is still to live and work from deep, inner sources.

What about finding a builder?

I always recommend not being in a rush to find a builder. It's better to let the design begin to emerge, get a better handle on timeline and budget, and then start looking - usually at the end of Schematic Design. Most of my out-of-state clients sign the agreement for "Administration of Contract" and it becomes my job to find your builder, see that the house is built right, and participate in the zillion ongoing decisions and finish selections.

How long does construction take?

That depends on size, weather, and degree of difficulty. Most 2,500 s.f. homes take 6-8 months. A big or elaborate project exceeding a million dollars will take a year or more. As a rule of thumb, consider a three-month baseline, and then add a month per \$100,000. In other words, a \$500,000 house might take eight months.

What else should we know?

I am an open book sort of guy and like to be clear about what I need in a working relationship. I work alone in the studio next to my house, and my 50+ hours a week are irregular. About half my workdays are spent in the field. I work a lot of weekends, and I'm usually available on holidays when my clients are able to visit. The payoff is that I get to plan and schedule a few weeks away every year, or just take the day off if the mountains call. But no worries – I am very good at organizing my work so that nobody's left in the lurch.

As regards telephone contact: please don't call me at home. You can call me on my office number absolutely any time, or on my cell phone *during office hours*. E-mail is the greatest thing since adobe bricks.

If I need something from you, or if I'm unhappy with some detail, I will definitely tell you rather than sit on it. I depend on you to do the same – this is a working relationship which will span months or even years, and communication is everything!

Additional details:

- Drawings should be ready 3-4 months before construction if there is to be financing, or 2 months in advance if there is no financing. Whatever the mortgage company tells you, you can count on up to twice as long to complete the loan process.
- I commonly produce an early appraisal set of drawings to get the loan process rolling.
- Most contractors need a month to properly estimate a house project.
- Most loans now require a signed Construction Contract to process the loan.
- Any work on your site in advance of the loan closing is termed "broken priorities" and will incur hefty additional insurance costs.
- Important site considerations: steep slope, septic location, well location (min. 100' from the septic), water line, roadway, power line, gas line if applicable, sewer line and sewer tap if applicable, telephone line.
- In Taos County, if any portion of the immediate building site exceeds 20% it is necessary to apply for a Steep Slope Variance. This is an elaborate procedure costing at least \$5,000 and requiring site plan, floor plan and elevations. Topographical survey and engineer participation required.
- Similarly, if your proposed roadway traverses 20% or greater slope, a special permit is required to ensure emergency vehicle access. This submittal invariably requires the participation of a civil engineer.
- Permits and regulatory procedures are becoming constantly tougher. Get a building permit application to see what documents are required. You will typically need:
 - Well permit
 - Septic permit
 - Solid waste fees receipt
 - County tax card or copy of your tax bill
 - Legal description, survey plat, warranty deed
- Insurance is also getting tougher, especially on projects exceeding a million dollars or on forested land and sites far from fire stations. I recommend exploring both Builder's Risk (for the construction phase) and Homeowner's insurance policies right away. Reason: sometimes the underwriter may require onsite water storage of up to 10,000 gallons, or a sprinkler system, or both.
- It's obnoxious and, for most out-of-staters, unusual – but New Mexico charges Gross Receipts Tax ranging from 6-8% on all design and construction services.