

KSX ARCHITECTURE

HIGH PERFORMANCE ARCHITECTURE

Guide to Working With Your Architect

Custom residential projects including new homes, additions, and renovations.



A comprehensive methodology for realizing your custom residential vision, outlining our process from initial discovery through construction and final closeout.

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Welcome

Designing and building a custom residential project is a deeply personal, collaborative, and rewarding endeavor. Whether you are constructing a new dream home from the ground up or breathing life into an older structure through a substantial addition or renovation, our studio's objective is to guide you with clarity and confidence.

This document demystifies the architectural process. It outlines our methodology, delineates responsibilities, and illustrates how we integrate sustainable, resilient, and green building practices to ensure your home is elegant, efficient, and enduring.

“Good architecture is the result of a rigorous process, a clear vision, and a trusted partnership between client and architect.”

Project Roadmap

A comprehensive overview of the sequential phases required to take your custom home from an initial concept to final occupancy.

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- Phase 1:** Discovery + Visioning
 - Phase 2:** Existing Conditions + Pre-Design / Feasibility
 - Phase 3:** Schematic Design
 - Phase 4:** Design Development
 - Phase 5:** Construction Documents
 - Phase 6:** Permitting + Agency Coordination
 - Phase 7:** Bidding / Negotiation / Procurement Support
 - Phase 8:** Construction Administration
 - Phase 9:** Punch List + Substantial Completion
 - Phase 10:** Project Closeout + Move-In Support

Process Summary

A visual map of the residential design, permitting, and construction administration journey.

PHASES 1 - 4

Design & Exploration

From initial discovery and site analysis to defining floor plans, massing, and material selections. We establish the budget, shape the concept, and align on high-performance sustainability targets.

CLIENT

ARCHITECT

CONSULTANTS

PHASE 5

Technical Documents

Translating the approved design into rigorous, highly detailed blueprints and engineering specifications required for permitting and accurate construction pricing.

ARCHITECT

CONSULTANTS

PHASE 6

Permitting

Navigating the bureaucratic landscape. Submitting architectural and engineering sets to municipalities, historic boards, and zoning authorities for rigorous code compliance reviews.

ARCHITECT

AUTHORITY

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PHASE 7

Procurement

Soliciting bids or refining negotiated pricing with preferred builders. Analyzing proposals to ensure comprehensive coverage, transparency, and alignment with the project budget.

CLIENT

ARCHITECT

CONTRACTOR

PHASES 8 - 9

**Construction
& Punch**

Shovels in the ground. The architect provides active site observation, answers RFIs, reviews payment applications, and ultimately executes a rigorous punch list to guarantee design intent.

CLIENT

ARCHITECT

CONTRACTOR

PHASE 10

**Project
Closeout**

Final inspections, certificate of occupancy, handover of system warranties, and operational training for the home's high-performance elements.

CLIENT

AUTHORITY

CONTRACTOR

Team Roles

A successful custom project requires an integrated team. Here is how we collaborate to bring your vision to life:

THE ARCHITECT

Leads the overall design process, navigates complex zoning and building codes, coordinates specialized consultants, produces the technical drawing sets, and advocates for your design vision and quality standards during construction.

THE CLIENT (YOU)

Provides the fundamental project vision and programmatic requirements, establishes the financial parameters, makes timely decisions on design directions and material selections, and holds the contracts for the team.

THE CONSULTANTS

Specialized professionals (e.g., Structural Engineers, Civil Engineers, Geotechnical Engineers, Landscape Architects, Energy Modelers) engaged to provide specific technical expertise essential to the project's success.

THE CONTRACTOR

Provides cost estimating, manages trade subcontractors, procures building materials, manages job site safety, obtains the building permit (in most jurisdictions), and physically constructs the home according to the architectural documents.

PERMITTING AUTHORITY

The local building department, planning office, historical commission, HOA review board, or zoning authority reviews the submitted work for compliance with local ordinances. Review timelines vary significantly, and receiving comments or requests for clarification is a standard part of the process.

Residential Project Types

Custom residential projects generally fall into two categories, which dictate how the process begins and the specific challenges involved.



NEW CUSTOM HOMES

Starting Point: Raw land or a tear-down property.

Process Impact: Requires comprehensive site analysis, soil testing, and utility planning. Offers maximum design flexibility as there are no existing structures dictating the interior flow or exterior massing.

RENOVATIONS & ADDITIONS

Starting Point: An existing structure that requires preservation, modification, or expansion.

Process Impact: Necessitates meticulous measuring and assessment (Phase 2). We must navigate existing structural constraints, integrate modern systems with older infrastructure, and seamlessly blend the new architectural language with the old.

The Ten Phases of Design & Construction

01 Discovery + Visioning

WHAT HAPPENS

We meet to discuss your lifestyle, programmatic needs, aesthetic preferences, and financial parameters.

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT

A deep dive into how you live, cook, entertain, and relax.

DECISIONS TO MAKE

Confirming the general scope of work, essential program, and target budget.

TYPICAL ARCHITECT DELIVERABLES

A project brief, preliminary schedule, and formal proposal.

SUSTAINABILITY + RESILIENCE OPPORTUNITIES

Establishing high-level green goals (e.g., targeting Net Zero readiness, passivhaus principles, or specific certifications).

HELPFUL TIP

When sharing visual inspiration (magazines, online boards), explicitly articulate *why* you are drawn to an image—is it the light, the material, or the volume?

WHAT HAPPENS

For renovations, we meticulously measure your existing home. For new builds, we analyze the raw land, topography, and execute a comprehensive zoning and setback review.

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT

Our team conducting on-site documentation, often utilizing 3D scanning or laser measurements.

DECISIONS TO MAKE

Approving the feasible scope based on strict zoning realities.

TYPICAL ARCHITECT DELIVERABLES

As-built drawings, baseline 3D models, and a zoning analysis report.

SUSTAINABILITY + RESILIENCE OPPORTUNITIES

Conducting a solar path analysis, prevailing wind studies, and planning for existing mature tree preservation.

HELPFUL TIP

Procure a professional property survey early. It is a strict requirement for almost all custom residential permitting and site design.

Schematic Design

WHAT HAPPENS

We translate the program into initial floor plans and massing models, exploring layout, scale, and spatial relationships.

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT

Reviewing architectural sketches and conceptual 3D massing. Early models may appear rudimentary as we focus on volume over detail.

DECISIONS TO MAKE

Selecting a preferred layout and architectural direction to advance.

TYPICAL ARCHITECT DELIVERABLES

Draft floor plans, conceptual elevations, and preliminary narratives.

SUSTAINABILITY + RESILIENCE OPPORTUNITIES

Designing compact, efficient layouts to minimize heating/cooling loads and optimizing window placement for natural daylighting.

HELPFUL TIP

Focus your feedback on the sequence and flow of the rooms rather than specific material finishes, which come later.

Design Development

WHAT HAPPENS

The schematic concept is refined into a definitive design. We select materials, specify windows, layout cabinetry, and coordinate with structural and MEP engineers.

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT

Detailed discussions and presentations regarding interior elevations, tile layouts, plumbing fixtures, and lighting design.

DECISIONS TO MAKE

Finalizing finishes, exterior cladding, millwork intent, and major building systems.

TYPICAL ARCHITECT DELIVERABLES

Detailed architectural plans, interior elevations, preliminary finish schedules, and coordinated consultant backgrounds.

SUSTAINABILITY + RESILIENCE OPPORTUNITIES

Specifying robust continuous insulation, thermally broken windows, and high-efficiency HVAC equipment.

HELPFUL TIP

Changes to the core layout become costly and time-consuming after this phase. Ensure you are completely satisfied before proceeding.

Construction Documents

WHAT HAPPENS

We translate the approved design into highly technical blueprints and specifications required by contractors for accurate pricing and construction.

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT

A quieter period of rigorous drafting, detailing, and engineering coordination.

DECISIONS TO MAKE

Very few. Your primary role is to review the final, comprehensive document set for approval.

TYPICAL ARCHITECT DELIVERABLES

A full architectural and engineering drawing set (often 50+ pages for a custom home).

SUSTAINABILITY + RESILIENCE OPPORTUNITIES

Detailing meticulous air-sealing strategies and moisture management systems within the wall assemblies.

HELPFUL TIP

These documents are highly technical. Rely on us to guide you through them rather than feeling overwhelmed by the structural details.

Permitting + Agency Coordination

WHAT HAPPENS

The technical drawings are formally submitted to the local building department and relevant review boards.

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT

Waiting. The municipality will review the plans for code compliance and typically request minor clarifications or revisions.

DECISIONS TO MAKE

Providing authorization and processing permit application fees.

TYPICAL ARCHITECT DELIVERABLES

Permit application sets and formal written responses to municipal comments.

SUSTAINABILITY + RESILIENCE OPPORTUNITIES

Submitting required energy code compliance reports, such as HERS ratings or specific local green building checklists.

HELPFUL TIP

Municipal review timelines are unpredictable and outside of the architect's or builder's control. Patience is essential.

WHAT HAPPENS

We assist in soliciting pricing, comparing builder proposals, and supporting contractor selection. If a builder was engaged early, this phase focuses on refining their negotiated pricing based on the completed documents.

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT

Reviewing comprehensive spreadsheets of construction costs, allowances, and builder qualifications.

DECISIONS TO MAKE

Selecting the winning contractor and executing the construction contract.

TYPICAL ARCHITECT DELIVERABLES

Bid leveling analysis, contractor capability reviews, and formal recommendations.

SUSTAINABILITY + RESILIENCE OPPORTUNITIES

Ensuring the selected contractor has demonstrated experience executing the specific green building standards detailed in the plans.

HELPFUL TIP

The lowest bid is frequently not the most accurate bid. Prioritize transparency, completeness, and communication style.

WHAT HAPPENS

Shovels hit the ground. We visit the site at regular intervals to observe progress, ensuring the builder is adhering to the architectural design intent and specifications.

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT

Seeing your vision materialize. You will also see us reviewing contractor shop drawings (like custom millwork) and answering Requests for Information (RFIs).

DECISIONS TO MAKE

Promptly approving any necessary change orders should unforeseen site conditions (especially in renovations) arise.

TYPICAL ARCHITECT DELIVERABLES

Site observation reports, supplemental sketches for field conditions, and review of contractor payment applications.

SUSTAINABILITY + RESILIENCE OPPORTUNITIES

Observing blower door testing to empirically verify the home's airtightness prior to drywall installation.



HELPFUL TIP

Direct all construction-related questions and directives through the architect or lead contractor, rather than speaking directly to trade subcontractors on site.

Punch List + Substantial Completion

WHAT HAPPENS

As construction concludes, we conduct a meticulous walkthrough to identify any incomplete, defective, or incorrect items—compiling the official "punch list."

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT

A detailed inspection noting minor aesthetic flaws, missing hardware, or system adjustments.

DECISIONS TO MAKE

Formally agreeing that the home is ready for its intended use (Substantial Completion).

TYPICAL ARCHITECT DELIVERABLES

The comprehensive Punch List document.

SUSTAINABILITY + RESILIENCE OPPORTUNITIES

Verifying that all HVAC systems have been properly commissioned and balanced for optimal indoor air quality.

HELPFUL TIP

Resist the urge to move furniture in until the punch list is largely complete to avoid damage and allow trades to finish their work efficiently.

Project Closeout + Move-In Support

WHAT HAPPENS

Final municipal inspections are passed, the Certificate of Occupancy is issued, and contractor warranties are handed over.

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT

Receiving a comprehensive binder of appliance manuals, system operations, and the keys to your new home.

DECISIONS TO MAKE

Processing final retainage payments and celebrating the culmination of the process.

TYPICAL ARCHITECT DELIVERABLES

Closeout checklist, warranty and maintenance turnover guidance, and final completion coordination.

SUSTAINABILITY + RESILIENCE OPPORTUNITIES

Participating in training on how to properly operate and maintain your new high-performance home systems.

HELPFUL TIP

Retain your closeout binder and as-built drawings in a safe location; they are invaluable for future maintenance or future additions.

What Affects Schedule & Budget

Custom residential architecture means designing a prototype; no two projects are identical. The following variables primarily drive financial costs and project timelines:

HIDDEN CONDITIONS

Opening walls in older homes frequently reveals unforeseen challenges—such as dry rot, compromised foundations, or outdated wiring—necessitating immediate budget contingencies and timeline extensions.

LEVEL OF FINISH

The delta between off-the-shelf subway tile and imported custom stone is massive. Cabinetry, architectural glazing, and premium appliances dictate a disproportionate share of the construction budget.

SITE CONSTRAINTS

Constructing on a severe slope, encountering subsurface rock/poor soil, or navigating a tight urban lot significantly escalates structural engineering, foundation, and logistical costs.

CHANGE ORDERS

Revising a wall's location on paper takes minutes; moving it after the foundation is poured costs thousands. Timely, resolute decisions during Design Development protect your budget.

LEAD TIMES

Custom fabrications—such as specialty European windows or bespoke millwork—can carry lead times spanning several months, directly impacting the critical path of the construction schedule.

PERMITTING CYCLES

Depending on the jurisdiction, zoning reviews, historical board approvals, and building department backlogs can add months to the pre-construction timeline.

Resilient & Green Home Strategies

We view sustainable, high-performance building practices as fundamental opportunities to elevate your home's comfort, health, and longevity. While pursuing formal certifications (such as LEED or Passive House) remains an optional client decision, the underlying principles inform all our work.

CATEGORY	STRATEGIES & OPPORTUNITIES
SITE	Optimizing solar orientation for passive heating/cooling; preserving mature trees for shading; managing stormwater safely on-site.
ENVELOPE	Deploying super-insulation; utilizing high-performance, thermally broken windows; executing meticulous air-sealing to prevent drafts.
ENERGY	Designing all-electric building systems (air-source heat pumps, induction cooking); integrating or pre-wiring for rooftop solar arrays.
WATER	Specifying low-flow, high-design plumbing fixtures; integrating rainwater harvesting systems for landscape irrigation.
MATERIALS	Prioritizing locally sourced and manufactured materials; utilizing sustainably harvested timber; selecting products with high recycled content.
INDOOR AIR QUALITY	Mandating zero-VOC paints, adhesives, and finishes; installing Energy Recovery Ventilators (ERVs) to guarantee a continuous supply of filtered fresh air.
DURABILITY	Engineering proper moisture management and vapor barriers; selecting rot-resistant exterior cladding and robust roofing materials.
BACKUP SYSTEMS / PASSIVE SURVIVABILITY	Implementing passive survivability strategies (ensuring the home maintains safe temperatures during power outages) plus optional battery backup systems for critical electrical loads.

Common Milestones & Decisions

Summary

PHASE	KEY MILESTONE	TYPICAL CLIENT DECISION
Discovery + Visioning	Project goals, priorities, and target budget confirmed	Align on scope, wish list, and decision-makers
Existing Conditions + Feasibility	Property constraints and opportunities documented	Confirm realistic project direction based on site and zoning
Schematic Design	Preferred plan, massing, and overall design direction selected	Choose the concept to refine
Design Development	Major systems, materials, and room-level planning aligned	Approve key finishes, fixtures, and performance priorities
Construction Documents + Permitting	Permit-ready drawing set completed and submitted	Authorize submission and associated filing fees
Bidding / Negotiation	Builder selected and construction cost reconciled	Choose contractor and confirm any scope adjustments
Construction + Closeout	Substantial completion, punch corrections, and turnover	Confirm readiness for occupancy and receive closeout materials

KSX ARCHITECTURE

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An Enduring Partnership

Thank you for reviewing this methodology. Designing and constructing a custom residence is a significant, complex undertaking, and we are deeply honored to serve as your trusted advisors, designers, and advocates on this journey.

READY TO TAKE THE NEXT STEP? LET'S BEGIN.

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