



The First Steps to

# Planning

Your Dream Home



“Where do I start?”

“I have so many ideas,  
how do they get turned into the  
home of my dreams?” “How do I find an architect who will  
listen to me and design the home I want?”

“I hear not all Architects use  
Virtual Reality, is that true?”

“How much money do I need to make sure t  
hat my budget and dream align?”

“Who can I trust?”

# The First Steps to Planning Your Luxury Dream Home

## The 7 Most Important Things You Need to Do

1. Understand the Architectural Process
2. Answer the Foundational Questions for Happiness
3. Estimate the Costs
4. Discern Myths from Reality
5. Interview an Architect
6. Have a Team of Expert Professionals
7. Assess your Readiness to Begin



Architect Peter Twohy, Principal of 2e Architects, has created a series of guidebooks after decades of experience designing luxury homes in the Baltimore and mid-Atlantic region. The latest in the series, compiles the *Seven Most Important Things* to know when you are planning, designing, and building a custom home. © 2021, All Rights Reserved. For more 2e Architects visit our website: [www.2e-architects.com/resources](http://www.2e-architects.com/resources)



# Getting Started

Congratulations on embarking on one of life's greatest journeys – designing and building your Dream Home.

Our clients, without exception, are very successful and very intelligent (and so wonderful that most have become friends). Nevertheless, even they have found the process of starting to plan, design, and build a dream home a bit daunting. They find so much conflicting information on the internet and elsewhere, that they feel they are going around in circles.

Does this sound like you? Or maybe your spouse?

I prepared this planning guide to provide the information and confidence needed to start the large, but rewarding endeavor of designing and building your own luxury, dream home. This Guide gives you an overview and helps you gather the right information you need to move forward. It helps you to answer key questions and provides an overview of how important following a proven architectural development process is to achieving your goal of living in and enjoying your dream home.

*“An investment in knowledge  
pays the best interest”*

– Benjamin Franklin





*The Keys to Your Dream Home Await You*

Building a dream home is a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Following this process will help you to arrive at the wanted conclusion.

<p>1. Research</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dreams and Ideas</li> <li>• Images</li> <li>• Inspirations</li> </ul>	<p>Your project will begin in the <b>Research</b> phase. This is where you get inspired and dream. You are gathering information and playing around with ideas about how your Dream Home will take shape.</p>
<p>2. Analysis</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meet with an Architect</li> <li>• Clarity Session</li> </ul>	<p>At the point when you are ready to firm up your ideas, you have begun the <b>Analysis</b> phase. Firms such as mine offer clients a <b>Clarity Session</b> appointment where we will review your project and budget. During the session we will also discover if we are a good fit for each other. Once you have defined your goals and the specific parameters of what you want for your new home, it is time to hire an architect and move to the next phase.</p>
<p>3. Concept Design</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Floor Plans</li> <li>• Front Elevation</li> <li>• Virtual Reality</li> <li>• 1st Cost Estimate (\$) </li> </ul>	<p>Floor plans are developed during <b>Concept Design</b>. Once you are satisfied with these, our firm designs the front elevation and creates 3D renderings and Virtual Reality for the exterior. At the end of <b>Concept Design</b>, two contractors will be asked to prepare detailed estimates of costs based on your specific plans and building site. These estimates will determine what changes (if any), need to be made to the design in the next phases.</p>
<p>4. Design Development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Virtual Reality</li> <li>• Interior Volumes</li> <li>• Elevations</li> <li>• Updated Estimate (\$) </li> </ul>	<p>With the budget set, we move into the <b>Design Development</b> phase. Here we will complete the exterior design and sculpt the interior volumes. We will use <b>Virtual Reality</b> technology to help you understand the design of your home and will provide <b>unlimited 3D Renderings</b> of your project—both inside and out. The more knowledge you have, the more confident you'll be in your decisions. The contractors update their estimates.</p>
<p>5. Interior &amp; Landscape</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The larger design team comes together</li> </ul>	<p>The entire design team including the structural engineer, interior designer, landscape architect, and pool designer are now in place and we will begin the <b>Interior and Landscape Design</b> phase. This larger design team collaborates and coordinates their work to best meet your design goals. In this phase, the design is finalized, materials and finishes are selected and approved.</p>
<p>6. Construction Documentation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Structural Details</li> <li>• Specifications</li> <li>• Final Cost Estimate (\$) </li> </ul>	<p><b>Construction Documentation</b>, which will be used by the builder to construct your dream home, is prepared by the design team. This set of documentation, including floor plans, elevations, and sections, will be given to three contractors, either of your choosing or to builders we have selected together. These contractors will then create a detailed bid for the project.</p>
<p>7. Bidding + Negotiation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify bidders</li> <li>• Review Bids (\$) </li> <li>• Submissions to review agencies.</li> </ul>	<p>During the <b>Bidding</b> phase, the design team, led by the architect, will review the contractor's bids. They will answer questions and provide clarifications when needed. The bids will be evaluated as equally as possible (e.g., some contractors include exterior patio work, others do not). The contractor is selected at the end of this phase and they will apply for all of the building permits required for construction to begin.</p>
<p>8. Construction Administration</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site Visits</li> <li>• Review Contractor's Request for Payment (\$) </li> <li>• Change Orders</li> </ul>	<p>At last, we break ground and the <b>Construction</b> phase begins. Throughout this phase, the architect is available to advise and answer questions and review the work for quality and the builders compliance with the construction documents. When construction nears completion, the architect submits the 'Punch List' of outstanding work to the builder for completion.</p>
<p>9. Move-In</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Punch List</li> <li>• Keys</li> <li>• Moving Van</li> <li>• Project Close-out</li> </ul>	<p>It is now time to present you with the keys to your dream home and for you to <b>Move In</b>. I do not have the words to express the elation of moving into your Dream Home! Suffice it to say it is a once in a lifetime experience!</p>





Planning, Designing, and Building Your Dream Home Starts with the Answers to these Foundational Questions

Big picture thinking. Your answers to these 7 foundational questions will define how you approach the design of your dream home.

1. How do you currently live? Is anything about to change?
2. What will you need to see (or hear from family and friends) to know your dream home has been a dramatic success?
3. Describe in some detail the 3 to 6 most important days out of the year for your family.
4. What is the budget? What is the timeframe?
5. Describe in some detail your ideal day.
6. How do you want to LIVE and FEEL in the home of your dreams?
7. How do you want your home to reflect who you are as a person?

# Dream Home Cost Estimator

A simple way to calculate your general, ballpark number

If it is not the first question, it is one of the first questions that architects and builders hear: "How much is my dream home going to cost to build?" Construction cost is a function of the price per square foot of air-conditioned space. The price per square foot varies greatly depending on several variables including, but not limited to these:

- Design Complexity. Rooflines, custom windows, room volumes, and materials choices greatly influence construction cost. (Complicated is an architectural code word for expensive).
- Site Accessibility. The level of site preparation required and the ease of accessibility to the building site are a factor.
- Finishes and Appliances. Some homeowners select \$23,000 stoves while others select their entire appliance package for less.
- Features and Amenities. 6 car garages cost more than 3 car garages.
- Outdoor Spaces. A home with expansive decks and large screened porches and water features will cost more.

Getting the budget right is important. Following the architectural process helps us to get to a fine level of detail needed for a reliable budget. During the **Design Development** phase, our practice uses technology-aided design tools like virtual reality homes tours, 3D drawings, and photo realistic renders so that our clients have the best understanding of their project and can make all of the decisions that effect the cost confidently. We also know that getting accurate feedback on costs from contractors early on in the process is key. This is why we share the plans during **Concept Design** and solicit feedback on the costs, so that our clients can make any needed adjustments.

	Luxury Home A	Luxury Home B	Luxury Home C
Size in square feet	\$250 (per sq foot)	\$325 (per sq foot)	\$400 (per sq foot)
3,000	\$750,000	\$975,000	\$1,200,000
4,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,300,000	\$1,600,000
5,000	\$1,250,000	\$1,625,000	\$2,000,000
6,000	\$1,500,000	\$1,950,000	\$2,400,000

Consider these as a benchmark of quality for the different cost breakdowns.

BMW 5 Series

BMW 7 Series

BMW M6

For planning purposes, we have put together this chart as a framework. These cost estimates cover general construction cost ranges. They do not include architectural services fees, interior designer or landscape architect fees, or items like furniture and other soft costs.

## Myth

The biggest problem people face when planning to build their dream home is going over budget.

## Reality

While going over budget is a very big problem, it is only the second biggest potential problem that all people planning to build a dream home face.

The biggest problem, by far, is spending your budget to the penny AND STILL NOT GETTING WHAT YOU WANTED. Obviously, this would be an enormous waste of money. But it is also a waste of time, both the time spent designing the home and, even worse, the time spent living in the home.

2e Architects solves these problems in two ways.

2e is pioneering the use of technology that help clients achieve their dream of a luxury home. By using **Virtual Reality** and **Unlimited 3D Drawings**, our clients and their contractors are able to fully see and completely understand exactly what the home will be like. Architectural drawings can be complicated to understand and forcing people to try to visualize the project in their own mind, which can lead to misinterpretations and costly changes. All of that work is done for you when you use Virtual Reality and have Unlimited 3D Drawings. All you need to do is sit back, put on the virtual reality goggles and remark about the experience as you move seamless from room to room—from outside to inside. Will discuss the pros and the cons and by the next meeting the pros will be accentuated even down to the smallest details and the cons will be gone. The experience is intoxicating. Many of my clients simply do not want to take the goggles off.

Secondly, we follow a proven architectural development process for every project. One of the most important steps is getting an early estimate on construction costs. As a part of the **Concept** Design, we will have two contractors provide detailed cost estimates. This lets us know early on if we are on the right path and gives us plenty of time to reassess if necessary.

## Myth

Architects only sketch the plans that a builder uses to construct your home. Anyone can do that.

## Reality

Architects oversee the entire architectural development process—from the **Research** phase to **Move-In**. They ensure that the home that they have so carefully detailed for their clients becomes that perfect, unique-to-you dream home reality. It would be impossible to list all of an Architects responsibilities, some of the key ones are:

- Architects have a thorough and proven process to determine the wants, needs, hopes, and dreams that you have for your home.
- Architects help you to identify your personal aesthetic style. They translate your exquisite taste and ideas into reality.
- Architects visit your building site or help select a building site and complete an analysis to ensure that your home takes full advantage the property.
- Architects review any easements or restrictions on the property.
- Architects design the circulation, flow, and volumes of every room.
- Architects design and detail the exterior—everything from general massing and shapes to the fine details of materials.
- Architects lead the team of professionals working with you to create your dream home, including the contractor, interior designer, and landscape architect.
- Architects review bids to assure accuracy and completeness.
- Architects provide technical construction documentation and specifications for the contractor and other design team members.
- Architects do site visits and meetings, overseeing the construction and validating quality of work, negotiating with contractors, and dealing with and resolving any problems that may arise.
- Architects create final punch lists prior to move-in.

# Asking the Right Questions

After working with countless clients, I learned there are two primary criteria upon which they based their selection of an architect. First, "who best understands me?" And second, "who communicates best with me?" The following questions will help you determine who will be right for you.

1. What is your process for understanding the wants, needs, hopes, and dreams that I have for my new home? How would you like me to share my ideas, images, samples, and research?
2. What is your design process? How will you make sure the design will meet or exceed my vision for my life in my new home?
3. Will I be working directly with you or will I be working mostly with one of your associates?
4. How will you handle the budget? Will you let me know if my budget is unrealistic?
5. How will you handle the timeline? Will you let me know if my timeline is unrealistic?
6. How will you interact with our contractor, interior designer, landscape architect, and others on our team?
7. Why have you chosen to focus your practice on residential architecture?
8. What can I do to help you deliver the best work for us?

One thing about human nature... personalities generally don't change... architects, contractors, clients do not change their personality or their communication style per project. This is why it is so important to have a rapport with the members of your design team. It cannot be overstated that you must feel a connection, especially with your architect, to ensure a positive working relationship throughout the entire project.

One of my favorite clients told me this story after we had finished their Whole-House Renovation. Her mother-in-law had advised against purchasing the home because she said it was simply 'too ugly to save.' After the renovation was complete, my client invited her mother-in-law back for the first time since the 'too ugly to save' visit. The mother-in-law was amazed at the transformation! Speechless even. Speechless until she said three little words that my client had never before heard ..... "I was wrong." My client tells this story with an ear to ear grin. For her, that felt as big a day as Neil Armstrong must have felt when he walked on the moon! She practically sings when she says: all the time, stress, and money were worth it just to hear those three words fall from her mother-in-laws lips!

## The Dream Team

After more than 20 years working as an architect, I've realized that designing and building a dream home requires several, top-notch professionals. This is the list of trusted partners I refer to in the mid-Atlantic region.

### ARCHITECT

2e Architects  
Peter Twohy  
410-583-2112  
peter@2e-architects.com

### CONTRACTORS

Raphael Homes  
Rick Raphael  
(410) 581-9822  
RaphaelHomes@aol.com

### SURVEYOR

Site Rite Surveyors  
Bernadette Mosconas  
(410) 828-9060  
siteriteinc@aol.com

### INTERIOR DESIGNER

Michelle Miller Interiors  
Michelle Miller  
(443) 928-0522  
michelle@michellemillerinteriors.com

### BATTON AND SON

Rick Batton  
(410) 628-6510  
battonandson@verizon.net

### D2 CONTRACTORS

Dale German II  
(443) 744-9074  
dale@d2contractors.com

### STRUCTURAL ENGINEER

Sweeney Engineering  
Pat Sweeney  
(410) 719-7446  
pat@sweeneyengineering.net

### LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT

Garden Architecture  
Kirsten Coffen  
(410) 593-9989  
kc@gardenarchllc.com

This list is offered as a courtesy. You are not required to use any of these professionals and inclusion in the list does not imply any endorsement. This list may change from time to time.

# Are you Ready?

This exercise helps you to assess, generally, in which of the beginning stages of the architectural design process you are in and if you are ready to engage an architect.



## CALCULATE YOUR RESULTS

Question	Answer (0 = I'm Not sure, 9= I'm Very Confident)
How clear are you on exactly what you need?	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
How aware are you of all the various options your site will accommodate?	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
How confident are you that you are aware of all the legal requirements?	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
How aware are you of the process to get the project completed on time and on budget?	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
How confident are you that you know your budget will achieve your dreams?	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
Give yourself a current overall rating for readiness.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

- > 25** You are still in the **Research** phase. A question and answer session with an Architect can help move your project forward.
- 26-40** You are likely in the **Analysis** phase, but in need of a Clarity Session with an Architect to help refine your goals and budget.
- 41+** You are ready to hire an Architect and start **Concept Design**.

If you are ready to move your project forward, please consider contacting 2e Architects. We offer several ways to start the conversation depending on which of the beginning phases you are in.

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