

# Six Characteristics of an Expert House Plan Designer

Debbie McAlexander October 30, 2014



Interior View - House Plan Designer

**Someone who chooses to build their own home should carefully pick their house plan designer, based on some proven attributes that separate the experts from the rest. Working with an experienced designer will prevent costly mistakes or serious problems that**

([Newswire.net](http://Newswire.net) -- October 29, 2014) Eugene, OR -- By the time many people are ready to build their dream home, they've pored over hundreds of pages

throughout dozens of interior design magazines, imagining countless custom treatments. And, while it's tempting to admire pictures of beautifully designed rooms, the true test of a top quality home begins with the details of a custom floor plan.

Every family is unique and a [custom home](#) designed specifically for a family's lifestyle can create an unparalleled living experience. From the home's entrance into the main living spaces, to the kitchen and dining configuration, or mudroom-utility and garage transition, the right floor plan can increase a family's convenience and overall quality of life.

Rick McAlexander, president and owner of [Associated Designs](#) in Eugene, Oregon, believes that a family who chooses to build their own home should carefully pick their house plan designer. Working with an experienced designer can prevent costly mistakes or serious problems after construction begins and ultimately offer a very special place the family is happy to call home.

"I find that my clients initially underestimate the complexity of building a home and are usually surprised to learn what it takes to be an expert in this field. After designing thousands of homes, I've come to realize how important it is for a homeowner to feel comfortable with their designer before the process even begins," says Rick.

Homeowners must do their own thorough research before choosing a designer for such a big investment as a home. Some may search on the Internet for a construction professional, but that may not be the best approach. A smart looking website does not necessarily equal an experienced home designer. To assist homeowners in the process of choosing a designer, Rick McAlexander encourages homeowners to consider six key characteristics before hiring a qualified professional.

**Personality** - Designing a home is a very personal project and the designer will be working closely with the homeowner. Many conversations involve a family's day to day living experience, which should be an enjoyable and comfortable experience. It's important for the client to like the designer as they interpret the family's goals and create a design that delights everyone involved.

**Experience** - How many projects has the designer completed of a similar nature to the one at hand? This is a different criteria than how long a designer has been in business. Someone who has experience designing office buildings or hospitals will not have the same set of skills as one who has focused their practice on residential design. Also, a designer whose primary focus has been entry level production housing may not have the skills required for an estate-sized home, while the reverse is also true.

**Reputation** - Obtain a list of references, including past clients and construction professionals. Inquire about the designer's history of delivering projects within the time frame promised and whether the client felt the fees were fair. Check with contractors about the quality of the construction documents, as well as how easy it was to follow blueprints. Did the designer promptly and effectively respond to questions that came up during construction? Check with the building department that will be issuing your permits to see if they are willing to discuss their experience with a specific building designer. Clients who take a thorough approach to checking a designer's record are ones most likely to have their home built on time and on budget.

**Design philosophy** - Some designers prefer a "you dream it, we draw it" style of communication. Others feel their experience dictates what's best for the client in a home's design, based on the designer's interpretation of the goals. Does the designer exhibit a more collaborative style, helping to educate and advise a client while maintaining a flexible

approach to the floor plan, allowing for input and personal preferences? Which of these styles will best fit a client's own communication style and comfort level?

**Level of service provided** - Designers run the gamut from "drafter" to "full service". A drafter simply uses a general floor plan and draws a set of plans, typically the minimum required to obtain a building permit. The full service designer will provide a custom approach, staying involved in the project from initial design concept through completion, providing assistance in all phases of construction. Many designers work somewhere in between, providing complete plan sets with enough detail for the contractor to confidently build, while allowing for consulting when needed throughout the construction process.

**Costs** - The original design is not the place to cut corners. How does the designer charge for services? Designers charge in a variety of ways, but most common are hourly, cost per square foot, or a percentage of construction costs. Normally the rates are commensurate with the level of experience, complexity of the project and service provided. The design is the most critical element of a successful project and worth the time and attention to this detail. Saving a few dollars by rushing a project or choosing the cheapest plan source could compromise the entire project. It is common for more money to be spent on the site preparation and home's foundation than the design. However, to get a good foundation requires a good plan. The most meticulously detailed and expertly constructed design will be a disappointment if it does not meet a family's lifestyle goals.

"Choosing a good designer is the most critical phase of the entire new home construction process," says Rick McAlexander. "Working with an experienced, professional designer should be a pleasure and result in a beautiful dream home that brings joy to the whole family for years to come," he added.

###

[Associated Designs](#) is located in Eugene, Oregon and designs custom house plans for developers, builders and homeowners. Plans are created by talented designers with more than 65 years of combined home design experience. Weekly columns featuring Associated Designs house plans are published in newspapers around the country. Since the company was founded in 1990, it has sold more than 60,000 home plans.

## **Associated Designs**

*1100 Jacobs Dr.*

*Eugene, OR United States 97402*

800-634-0123

[rick@associateddesigns.com](mailto:rick@associateddesigns.com)

<http://www.associateddesigns.com>

Source: <http://newswire.net/newsroom/pr/00085819-expert-house-plan-designer.html>