

Black Mountain Design Process – 7 Steps

Black Mountain Architecture was established in 2012 and specializes in single-family residential and light commercial. The primary service area includes the Gallatin Valley, Big Sky, Helena and the Madison Valley.

1. Determining the Level of Service Needed

- Black Mountain specializes in providing quality architectural services at an affordable price. This is accomplished by limiting the scope of services to the essentials needed to construct your home. This process requires more effort on the part of the owner and builder to determine many of the interior details. Surprisingly, the limited services strategy provides most of the design information needed to build your home without the costs associated with designing every detail. That being said, we are willing and qualified to provide traditional full-service architecture if need be.
- This method of service typically requires that a builder be involved in the process to help keep a check on building costs. It is acceptable if you desire your project be bid out to a few different contractors, however the bidding process requires a little bit more work on our end to ensure that the builders are bidding apples to apples.

2. Fee Proposal

- Once we understand the level of service desired, we will prepare a fee proposal for your review and consideration. Typically, we will provide you with a fixed fee that is based on historical data for projects of the same type. The hope is that the design costs will be covered within the fixed fee, however sometimes the services required exceed the fixed fee. This can happen when the project requires more meetings and design iterations than are typical or needs to be re-designed due to being over budget. Sometimes local jurisdictions and subdivision approvals take more time and work than expected. Work done beyond the fixed fee will be billed at an hourly rate.
- Since each custom home project is unique, we do not have “standard” fees. Our proposed fees are determined by a number of factors, e.g. size of home, location, complexity, etc.
- Once an agreement is reached, your project will be put on our job list, a design timeline will be established, and we will schedule times to meet.

3. Information Gathering

- This step is done with a combination of meetings and questions that we have prepared in advance. This form will be given to you prior to our first meeting.

4. Site Plan/ Floor Plan Concepts

- After we have collected all the information needed to design your home, we will begin working on concept designs. These initial designs will establish the location of the house on your lot, a viewshed analysis, and a floor plan concept.
- The first drawings will be either hand sketches or computer-generated drawings. They will be sent to you electronically as PDF’s. Typically, clients will provide feedback on the preliminary design via email or phone, but we are happy to sit down in person as needed.

- There is usually some back-and-forth between the client and architect before the floor plan is to your satisfaction.

5. Exterior Elevations

- The next step is to design the outside of the home. We do this by “building” your home in our 3D software.
- We will present you with computer generated 3D images showing our proposed design. Like the site plan/ floor plan step, there will be a few iterations of the design until the outside looks like what you envisioned.

6. Preliminary Cost Check

- Once the site plan, floor plan and exterior elevations are complete, we recommend that you show the design to your builder to get them to give you a “gut check” regarding costs. Experienced builders usually can look at a house design and give you a pretty good idea of whether the project is within your budget.
- The purpose of this step is to make sure we are all comfortable with the anticipated construction costs before we finish the rest of the construction documents.

7. Construction Documents

- This step involves us completing the technical drawings. The construction documents provide the necessary detail for your builder to get hard bids and the information required to build the home.
- Depending on the complexity of the home, structural engineering may be required. The State of Montana currently does not require structural engineering for single family residences. However, the greater Bozeman area is located in a high wind and seismic zone so lateral engineering is required via braced walls (shear walls) which sometimes need to be designed by an engineer. We will assist the Owner in soliciting the services of a structural engineer and will coordinate structural information as required.

Construction Administration

- *Traditionally the Architect provides periodic visits to the building site and assists in the construction process. The limited service that we typically provide does not include construction administration, but we are happy to answer questions during the building process and will provide additional services if requested by you.*