

Santa Fe REAL ESTATE Guide

Artisan/craftsman/**builder**

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On the process of house design

by Kurt Faust

If you cannot find the right existing home in Santa Fe, you may decide to design your own custom home. The process is easy to understand and the design should reflect your aesthetic, functional, and budget priorities. It makes sense to design a home from scratch to get exactly what you want.

Assuming that the homesite is already chosen, one begins with an extensive interview process outlining the "program" for the house. The program is all of the requirements, ideals, details, and desires of the client expressed as a set of priorities and issues to be resolved. The design, therefore, becomes the resolution of these in terms of "form" and "function," the term used to describe what the house will look like and how it will be used.

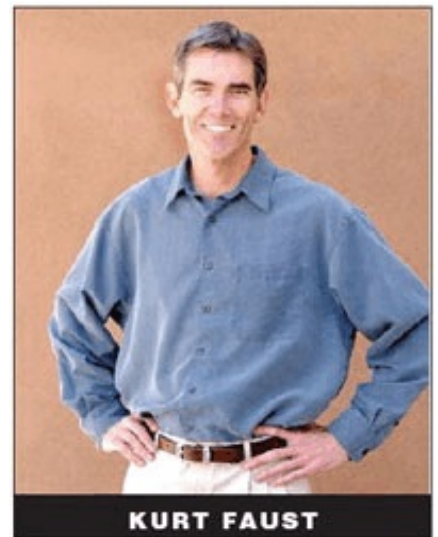
Most people have strong feelings about the style and visual form they want surrounding them. It can be very helpful to begin a collection of compelling pictures in magazines and books in order to communicate your preferences in form.

Every program has its own combination of functions. Who uses each room and how will it be used? Activities often overlap from one space to the next. Function asks such questions as: How do you cook? Who do you entertain? How much storage is needed? It asks for all the unique uses which become the basis for the shape of the building.

After the interview your dreams really begin to take shape with "schematic" drawing, a small-scale drawing that shows the size of rooms and the relationships among them. There are sometimes two or three schematics generated and each is a different idea of how the issues in the program might be resolved. The schematics are then evaluated and a composite is distilled out of the best features of each one. A new schematic is generated and then developed in the "design development" phase.

Design development proceeds to develop the ancillary spaces, the architectural features, and the aesthetic considerations. This phase works out the final square footage and must effectively target a specific budget. Take your time with this phase. Enjoy working on this until all of the issues have been resolved as best they can be.

Now that the floor plan and elevations have been decided upon and finalized, there is usually some kind of formal process to document them. Changes made now are far more efficient to execute than after the "construction documents"



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(CD's) have begun. The CD's consist of all the drawings necessary to obtain a building permit, plus any other drawings needed to communicate how the special architectural details are to be built.

When the design development is done and you are certain of falling within budget, it is time to choose the "specifications" (specs) for the finish materials. It is important to integrate the specs into the CD's. The backsplash tile pattern will dictate the locations of the electrical outlets. A particular mirror will determine the location of the vanity light. An island cooktop or sink will need preparation in the slab.

You are now ready to see the dream become real. That exciting day comes when all of these items converge with the proper financing, the final construction contract, and the permits and approvals.

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