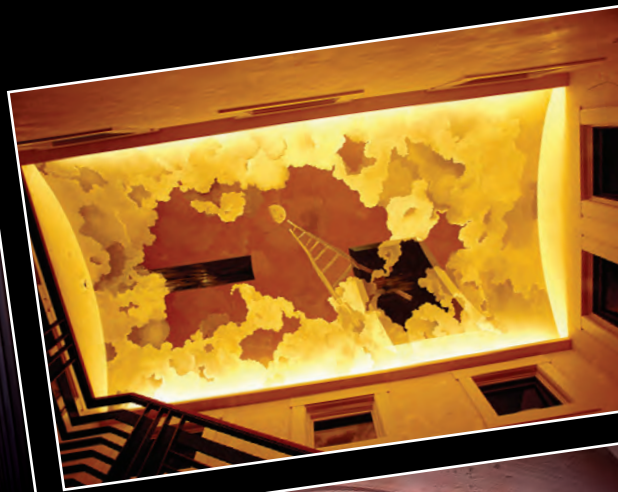


**STEAMBOAT
ARCHITECTURAL
ASSOCIATES**

970.879.0819 Box 772910
Steamboat Springs, CO 80477

www.steamboatarchitectural.com



BRINGING HOME DESIGN INTO FOCUS

Whether you're designing a home in the mountains, on the shore, or even remodeling a condominium in a dense urban area, there's a way to approach your architectural design that is common to any environment. Whether you prefer the Jetsons to the Wild West, Europe to the Far East, or cluttered to Spartan, there's a basic method that works with any style. Multistory, ranch or fragmented, on any budget, new construction or remodel... it's important to start with a good look around.

To start the design process, we typically visit the site with clients and walk the land. We consider access, what is already built in the area, and what might be built around the lot in the future. We take a look at the long and short views.

It's great to have clients stand and point at the views they like and don't like. A view that I might think is exceptional may be mundane to a client who has lived in an area their entire life. The views can be grand vistas that demand a picture window and dominate a room. They can be "happy accidents" or small, planned, narrowly-focused scenes.

Focus can be on a distant feature, a tunnel view between natural features or other buildings, a favorite tree or garden within the site. Contemplate the type and amount of vegetation and how it will be affected by the seasons. Will views come and go with the leaves? Can the existing plants be used to screen undesirable views? What is really worth saving?

As you're standing there, take note of where and how planes, trains and automobiles impact the site. Some people enjoy the sound of a train, but most prefer to minimize the effect of manmade sights and sounds.



I usually walk a site at different times of the day and - if possible - in different seasons, to see how the sun and shadows travel across the site. The sun may be very high and warm in the summer, but in the winter it may never rise above an adjacent ridgeline. The views to the west may be spectacular, but the late afternoon sun may bake the inside of a home without adequate sun protection. As an extra precaution, I always advise clients to investigate in the evening to locate nearby light sources. A business center that is unseen during the daytime can create a glare that is annoying at night. Also, you may find that headlights wash areas of the site. Knowing if and where this occurs can give you a heads up on where to locate bedrooms, especially for light sleepers.

Once the site constraints and opportu-

nities are determined, it is time to determine how your home will fit on the lot. Again, the design principle here depends largely on visual elements. Should the rooms be positioned to take advantage of the views, or to minimize the impact of a negative view? Where are decks and patios located? Do you want to walk directly onto grade, or will your entry be on a raised deck above your yard? Will the decks highlight a view, your yard or the driveway and parking area? Can the rooms be configured to reduce the amount of earthwork required?

On a sloped lot, mechanical areas, laundries, storage rooms and home theaters can be partially or fully buried into a hillside. On a flat lot, these rooms and the garage can be used to block views, or create a privacy barrier so foot and vehicle traffic can't peer into your home.



to feel that you've reached a destination. Entering directly into a room, coming into a multilevel space, or looking out windows to the view beyond are ways to make you feel you've arrived.

There are many other techniques to help guide someone around a home. Defining paths with flooring material can help. Wood running the length of a hall, or leading across a large room, with adjacent spaces being some other contrasting material is one way to define a path. Color can be used in the same way. A more dramatic approach is to work with ceiling heights, real or faux beams and the use of high glass above the line of sight. An especially effective way to create this sense of course is to have a defined route across a great room that runs under an upper level walkway, or loft.

Once the interior spaces are sketched out, it's important to step back to look at the overall plan and where a design is headed. Are you taking advantage of the views you want? Does the layout of the rooms work with the way you live? Is the path through the house interesting with focal points and a clear sense of arriving and departing spaces? How do the rooms relate to the site, emphasizing positive features and down playing less desirable ones? And most importantly, how does the design relate to your budget?

With the basics of visual movement taken care of, you're ready to approach exterior and interior design. This is where you decide on styles, textures, materials and colors. So now the fun begins, but that's a discussion for another time. Good luck!

Bill Rangitsch is the Principal Architect for SAA. For more than 20 years, SAA has provided architectural services for commercial, residential and interior design projects of a wide variety, specializing in custom residences with site-specific design. For more information and illustrations of Rangitsch's point of view, visit www.steamboatarchitectural.com. Rangitsch and SAA can be reached at (970) 879-0819.

"ALL THE EFFORT PUT INTO YOUR SITE DESIGN CAN BE USED TO ORIENT ROOMS TO THE DESIRED VIEWS, TO DRAW NATURAL LIGHT INTO SPACES, AND TO AVOID UNDESIRABLE CONDITIONS."

One of the biggest design features that is often overlooked - and quite often forgotten - is how you will approach your home. What is the first thing that you see when you arrive? Is it the front door, a living area, a garden or deck? The old saying, "you only have one chance to make a first impression" is especially true when it comes to designing the entryway to your home. More often than not, it's the garage doors guests see first. I call this kind of design, "welcome to my garage" style.

With the groundwork having been laid, it's time to move inside. All the effort put into your site design can be used to orient rooms to the desired views, to draw natural light into spaces, and to avoid undesirable conditions. By starting with broad layouts and working toward more detailed concepts, the floor plan can be dialed in. But beware: There is no definitive solution for producing a floor plan. There is only a series of compromises to achieve a result that satisfies as

many desires as possible. It's important to consider visual interest as you move around within your home. Rather than walking around in a haphazard way, it's always good to have a visual guide. The focus can be as simple as an exterior view, as grand as a sweeping vista, or as planned as a small garden outside a window. Natural light coming from multiple directions at a given point can make even the largest home or room seem more intimate.

If you're working on the lower level, or a hallway where natural light is scarce, you may need to come up with an alternative solution. Using the same visual theory, you can direct a path toward a built-in cabinet, another door, an interesting architectural feature, or one of my favorites, an art wall or display space. Having a destination in sight can be especially effective when designing stairs. A piece of art, a built-in, or a view can lead you up and down the stairway. When arriving at the next floor, it's good