



STUDIO 286 River Road West MAIL P.O. Box 248 • Manakin-Sabot, Va 23103-0248 PHONE (804) 784-1200 FAX (804) 784-1201

frequently asked questions

In order to give each prospective client a better understanding of the design-build process, we have put together the following responses to some of the more commonly asked questions about design-build contracting. Of course, HomeMasons welcomes any additional questions you may have, and we encourage you to contact us.

Why should I choose a design-build contractor?

This method of contracting is tailor-made to suit each client's needs for architectural and construction services. The design-build approach to building brings together professional design and construction expertise. One company handles both design and construction, which means you enjoy greater continuity of services. This joining of design and construction functions also can save you time and money, and helps make you more of a partner in the construction or remodeling process.

Why should I choose HomeMasons for my building project?

Design-build has been HomeMasons' most popular means of contracting utilized to date, and our extensive design-build experience translates into your peace of mind and satisfaction throughout the building process. HomeMasons will meet your requirements for space and functions, design and decorating taste, and budget maintenance. Because we have complete in-house control of all design and construction processes and schedules, HomeMasons will provide a single point of contact and accountability from conception through design and completion of construction.

The contracting relationship is one built on trust and mutual desire for a good building experience. A non-adversarial relationship is much easier on all parties. Since HomeMasons' design and construction teams work together in the design phase to ensure the best value for your dollar, the best constructability, and lack of errors and/or omissions in the drawings, you have our turn-key assurance that there will be no hidden or unexpected costs.

HomeMasons has designed in-house and completed construction of numerous projects. Our design-build clients have responded very favorably to the process, and have expressed a high satisfaction level with HomeMasons' implementation.



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In summary, several of the factors that one should consider in selecting a design-build contractor include:

- responsiveness to client's design needs
- record of excellence in design
- knowledge of building systems and products
- personal compatibility and ability to communicate
- ability to create the highest value as defined by the client's prioritized needs
- proven capability to provide craftsmanship of the highest caliber
- record of client satisfaction
- record of performance regarding budget and schedule maintenance

Our best testimonials come from our many previous clients that have sent us referrals and continue to be delighted with their choice of HomeMasons. We would be happy to provide a reference list; contact us.

How do I get the design-build process started and what initial steps are involved?

HomeMasons, Inc. representatives will meet with you to define your needs. This meeting is at no cost or obligation to you. Be prepared to list your objectives in order of priority. In the case of a remodeling project, tell us what you like about your existing home, and what you need to improve. We'll talk about your stylistic preferences. Don't be embarrassed to pull out your file of designer magazine clippings.

Let's not be shy about budget and schedule. Everybody has some idea of where they need to be, to make their project work for them. If you are comfortable divulging your budget, we'll be able to describe what you should expect those dollars to buy. Otherwise, we'll consider the requirements and expectations that you've outlined, and provide an experience-based range of design and construction cost for accomplishing those goals. Depending on the complexity of the project, we'll probably be able to provide some figures and timeframes during our on-site meeting.

The objective of this initial meeting is for the prospective client and contractor to determine if we're a good "fit" for each other. We think the best relationships are forged by a matching of personality, style, interest in the project, budget and availability. Do all of these things seem to match-up? Perhaps we should proceed to the next step.



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We like what we have to offer each other. Then what?

We want to take you from general to specific. We'll enter-into a preliminary design agreement, which will include documentation of your existing site and/or home conditions (pictures and measurements, and the creation of an "as built" plan). Considering your requirements, we will then draft preliminary options for floor plans, exterior appearance and create recommended outline specifications for your project. Depending on the possibilities for your project, there will likely be several possible solutions presented. Having developed this fairly specific response, this design information allows us to "home in" on your budget much more closely. Typically, at the end of that process, we will be able to give you a new estimate which is guaranteed within +/- 10% accuracy. We'll also be able to define the schedule, and talk about the process of building this design. While there is no charge for the estimate, there is a design retainer required for developing the conceptual plans and specifications.

The results of the preliminary design study are presented to you, and HomeMasons will address your questions, concerns, and comments. At this point, we want to determine together if HomeMasons is offering the type of design response you are looking for, at a price and schedule that is acceptable to you. Are we still a match, and are we ready to go to the next step of commitment?

What steps are involved in finalizing the design once I've decided to proceed with my design-build project?

When you are happy with the schematic design and comfortable with our proposal, we'll enter-into an agreement to complete design development, working drawings and specifications. That contract will be drafted such that HomeMasons' services are terminated without penalty upon completion of drawings and specifications. However, as our design is key to creating a competitive response in our overall package, and is in itself an exceptional value, our documents are proprietary, and may not be used for construction purposes by another contractor.

We'll develop all of the details that completely describe the work and manner of construction. Our design team will also start to work in earnest with you to develop all of your product specifications, which will include shopping trips for fixtures, finishes, and the like. We very much want to firm-up every detail, as we find that the best-running projects are ones that are set up for success in the planning stages, and leave little "guesswork" to the production process.



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We are working hard with you during this stage of the process, and our mutual success is based on your involvement and input. Let's focus on all the details now, so that the construction stages will be made much easier on both of us.

If necessary, revisions to the design will be incorporated during the development of the drawings. You benefit from this process by having the opportunity to make changes with our advice and budgetary input during the design process, when such changes are far less expensive than during construction. Upon completion of the drawings and specifications, the design team will review these documents with you in detail for final approval. Your understanding of the plans and specifications is essential to the ultimate success of your project.

After you have decided on the options you wish to proceed with, HomeMasons will provide a fixed price and final schedule for the project. Trusting that we are still meeting your expectations in every regard, we will then draft and execute the construction contract.

What other issues would need to be taken care of prior to start of construction?

HomeMasons attends to acquisition of all necessary approvals from governing officials, assuring building code compliance, and pays or sees to payment of all related fees, depending on structure of the contract. You, the client, are generally required to obtain any private approvals from neighborhood or subdivision review boards and associations, etc., but we are available to assist as may be required. Likewise, participation in tax abatement and renovation tax credit programs is generally the responsibility of the Owner, although we will be happy to assist you in navigating these processes.

How does the construction process work?

Starting with our on-site preconstruction conference, we recognize that open communication is the key to meeting your expectations throughout this process. We will keep you fully apprised of what is happening at all stages of work. We endeavor to make the construction phase, which can be a major "once in a lifetime" experience, as enjoyable as possible.

We are acutely aware that your project is of great personal importance to you. We are prepared for the emotions that will probably be involved, and will do everything we can, to keep those very positive. Will there be changes in direction? Is every detail going to move according to the original plan? We are ready to deal with those things to make your project work.



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Projects are meticulously managed from our office, as well as by our superintendent and full-time “lead carpenter” assigned to your project. With minor exceptions, and always keeping you apprised of events, our folks will be on your job every single working day until it is done. All of this organization is set in place to assure the best management of schedule and quality control, and to allow the least possible disruption of the homeowner/occupant’s daily routine.

We warrant all our work and materials for at least a period of one (1) year after completion; some equipment and materials are warranted for a longer period by manufacturers’ warranties.

How do I know that I am getting a competitive price?

We feel that HomeMasons must give the best, most competitive pricing in order to be awarded a design-build contract. We realize that if we don’t price work competitively, HomeMasons may lose business to other contractors in the area.

HomeMasons uses realistic allowances as defined through our knowledge of your needs from the outset of the project. Many contractors in a competitive bid situation will use inadequate allowances in order to get their bid as low as possible and then make up the difference on change orders. Our in-house design and construction avoids the additional hidden after-bid costs common to other projects due to competitive bidding on other’s drawings because certain items on those drawings have been left incomplete or open for interpretation. With our fixed-price form of agreement, HomeMasons guarantees costs to be within budget. With the exception of changes made electively by the Owner, there will be no hidden or unexpected costs. In fact, due to our extensive up-front design communications, our average for additional work authorizations during the course of any project is exceptionally low. On remodeling projects, there are certain “hidden conditions” clauses, which do apply, although our extensive experience has proven to limit that exposure to a minimum.

The value of HomeMasons’ single source, turnkey guarantee as to completeness and code-compliance of the scope of work must be considered. You will realize additional savings in cost and time by not having to wait and pay for all design services prior to finding out that the project, as designed, is not within your budget. The contract sum is all-inclusive, without gaps between the contractor’s and the designer’s responsibilities. Your time and effort are minimized because you are dealing with a competent contractor. We are



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committed to working hard, and working smart, to organize our client's time and involvement in the process. There is a value associated with your peace of mind in knowing that costs and schedules will not be overrun, and knowing that we are always looking out for your best interests.

HomeMasons' services are of exceptional value when compared to the same services from an architectural firm, home designer, and /or other contractors.

If I want to “bid out” my project, how can I accomplish this within the design/build process?

HomeMasons, Inc. welcomes you to seek competitive proposals. You should know that our proposal is a complete package, and for a true “apples to apples” comparison, you should request proposals of the same nature. There are several other design-build contractors in the area who will agree to go through a similar process of defining your needs, feasibility schedule, designing and budgeting the project. In addition to price comparison, we believe it may be of great value to you to study our competitors' responsiveness, quality and workability of design, and reputation for past performance.

As a prospective design-build client, you have many more choices than a client considering only price from several contractors on a single set of plans. This is because the design-build client can consider several design solutions in addition to price. We feel that this is one of the greatest benefits of considering design-build over the conventional design-and-bid method, and are glad to compete with any competent local firms on this basis, well assured that our capabilities will prove that our packaged proposals are the best real value.

When does it make sense to use an Architectural firm?

We readily admit that HomeMasons cannot be “everything to everybody”. Our firm works within a market niche of building a certain range of product for a certain type of client. Within that realm, we are confident in our ability to serve and deliver, with ease of process and enduring value.

Upon consultation with a prospective client, we will advise whether or not our services and our process are the right value producing “fit” for that client. Naturally, there are a number of people that might not feel comfortable with a process such as this, “less traditional” approach. We certainly want everyone involved to feel at ease with what we have to offer.



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HomeMasons recognizes that there are situations where a client would be wise to enlist the services of an architectural firm. We will let a prospective client know if their needs fall outside of our areas of regular practice and/or expertise. When the conditions of a project dictate this course of action, we believe a prudent client should work with a trustworthy contractor from early in the design phase to ensure that the project can be built within budget. This method avoids the disappointment associated with bidding a project competitively only to find that the as-designed cost exceeds the budget.