



Working at the Intersection of Art, Architecture & Design

Magic occurs at the intersection of Art, Architecture & Design. Magic that creates the essence of "Home":

- Intimacy of enclosure counterbalanced by views into other possibilities.
- The inspiration of daylight and the out-of-doors counterbalanced by the comfort and protection of walls and a roof.
- Rhythm and texture of repetition counterbalanced by the calm of solid construction.
- Distinctive art or features that say 'this is *my* space' counterbalanced by the need for the familiar profiles of "Home".

Too often home remodeling is about limits – limits of cash, time, and imagination. Instead, at Braitman Design, perceived limits of cash or space are turned to advantage. They inform the possibilities rather than constraining them. We are skilled at using inexpensive materials in novel ways. At creating comfortable multi-use areas within the existing footprint. At creating wonderful works of art to solve problems.

Those who know me will find it strange to hear me speak about "essence" and "spirit". I'm a pragmatist. I get things done rather than talk about them.

I bring a wealth of skills that result in successful projects:

- The ability to envision a better reality -- to sculpt a space in my mind with exquisite attention to detail, function and form. And then to communicate that vision (with 3-dimensional drawings) so my client can own and modify it with me.
- The ability and willingness to make linkages and find solutions that lie between the traditional boundaries of architecture, design, art and construction.
- The drive and skill to "get it done right" -- and that includes on-budget completion.

- Creativity in the approach to solving problems.
- Managing remodeling in my own homes before starting on clients – knowing what makes a difference in your life.

Conceptual Design Phase

Design starts with understanding a client's goal and needs:

- The immediate problems that prompt a desire for remodeling – perhaps the need for a larger kitchen or the desire to connect with the outside.
- Lifestyles – a home for a couple that enjoys frequent formal entertaining is different from a home for a couple that work at home and "cocoon".
- Dreams – the dream lifestyle that you think is beyond your means or the home's bounds.

I need to get to know you to turn your current home into your dream house.

The primary product during conceptual design is one or more conceptual design alternatives that meet Client's goals along with 3-dimensional drawings to help clients visualize the alternatives.

These alternatives help focus the discussion on more concrete choices and the inevitable trade-offs in the remodeling process.

After one or several iterations, we will agree on a preferred design to take to the next stage.

Review of Construction Feasibility & Cost Reduction Alternatives

After conceptual design but before spending money on detailed construction drawings, I prefer to bring in construction specialists (and engineering as needed) to review the design and to provide initial cost estimates and feasibility assessments. This allows us to modify the design with the client to achieve the goals with less cost or disruption.

Construction Phase

Contractors require detailed drawings and construction specifications in order to prepare accurate price bids. These drawings are prepared only after conceptual design is agreed upon. The same drawings are usually sufficient (with a few additions) to secure permits from local authorities.

We typically work with clients in one of two ways to accomplish the remodel or addition:

- **Design/Build** – Most of our clients prefer that we take full responsibility for the design and construction process. In a Design/Build relationship we hire all the contractors, secure permits and procure all required specialty materials such as fixtures, tile, and cabinetry. We take responsibility for keeping the project on budget and on schedule. We project, in advance, the decisions at each stage and work with the homeowner to make those decisions in a timely manner. We typically have weekly status, decision and budget meetings. We work on an hourly basis, but typically, the cost of managing the building process is 15-20% of the estimated construction costs. This rarely amounts to true extra costs but instead is money saved on the overhead of using a general contractor and limiting change orders, re-work, budget overruns, and lost work time by the homeowners – not to mention reduced frustration and worry.
- **Construction Review with or without Interior Design**– Some of our clients prefer to hire a general contractor who will handle project management and materials sourcing. But they ask Braitman to help them ensure the work is built to plans and specifications. Activities include periodic site visits, approval of progress invoices for fixed-price projects and regular reports of project progress. However, the contractor is solely responsible for construction methods, techniques, schedules and costs. In these cases, we sometimes also act as the design contractor handling finish details such as tiling, painting and so on. and mechanical requirements) but want us to coordinate decisions and procure materials such as cabinets and tile. This relationship can occasionally lead to differences of opinion about how to proceed.

To understand the practical difference in these roles, you need to think about the myriad small decisions that go into remodeling – for example, the height of a faucet or depth of a window sill.

These details can be specified in the construction documents but may change as you find the unexpected or see the work in process. Ultimately, decisions will be made onsite by the homeowner, Braitman or the contractor.

Braitman is your advocate in this environment and is guided to make these decisions in ways that respect your esthetic and budget. We are best able to succeed in this role in either the Design/Build or Project Coordination roles. In these roles, Braitman will have identified that decision in advance but after other unknowns have been fleshed-out and will make the decision with the homeowner in the course of one of the weekly meetings.

In the construction review relationship, unless you have thought to make this decision in advance, it is likely that the decisions will be made on the spot by the contractor based on efficiency. It's hard for them to stop to call and ask your opinion. The result may be a look you don't prefer or additional cost to have it changed after the fact.

The appropriate decision about roles is dependent on the homeowner's available time, attention to detail, familiarity with the remodeling process; previous working relationships among parties; and, budget and schedule flexibility.

Decisions about construction responsibilities can wait until after the conceptual design phase.