

AO  
ME

# Getting Started

## Guide





# Congratulations!

You are preparing to embark on what should be one of your life's greatest journeys (when done correctly that is.) But we know that contemplating such a big endeavor can be daunting — this guide is here to help you start down the right path to the better future you seek.

This brief introduction touches on topics that will all involve much more in depth review as you progress through the whole design and building process. If you find you need even more guidance before reaching out, read through to the end for additional resources that should help.





# The Problem

Building your own luxury home should rank among the most positively exciting and meaningful experiences of your life. The best way to assure such an outcome is to choose the right project team... but how to do that?



If you are like most, you have only a little or even no experience with the custom build process and may feel you are in over your head — ill equipped to make the right choice, without help.

Or, if you've done it before, had poor experiences you don't wish to repeat. The kind of disasters we've all heard about. Disasters that are completely avoidable with **the right team on your side.**

# So many questions

Potential problems create many questions at this early stage:

**We've never done this before,  
where do we start?**

**How do we find an architect we can trust, one who will listen to us and design what we want?**

**Our ideas for the project seem so clear and yet somehow also jumbled — how will anyone understand what we want to achieve?**

**How do we know we can build our dream home on our property?**

**We hear horror stories of runaway budgets — how do we establish a workable budget and keep costs under control?**

**Are we ready for all that is going to be necessary?**

**This Planning Guide  
will help you begin to  
answer these questions,  
and many more,  
in a systematic way.**





# Pre-Planning

## The Six Crucial Steps to Complete Before you Get Started

1. Become familiar with the **Design Process**

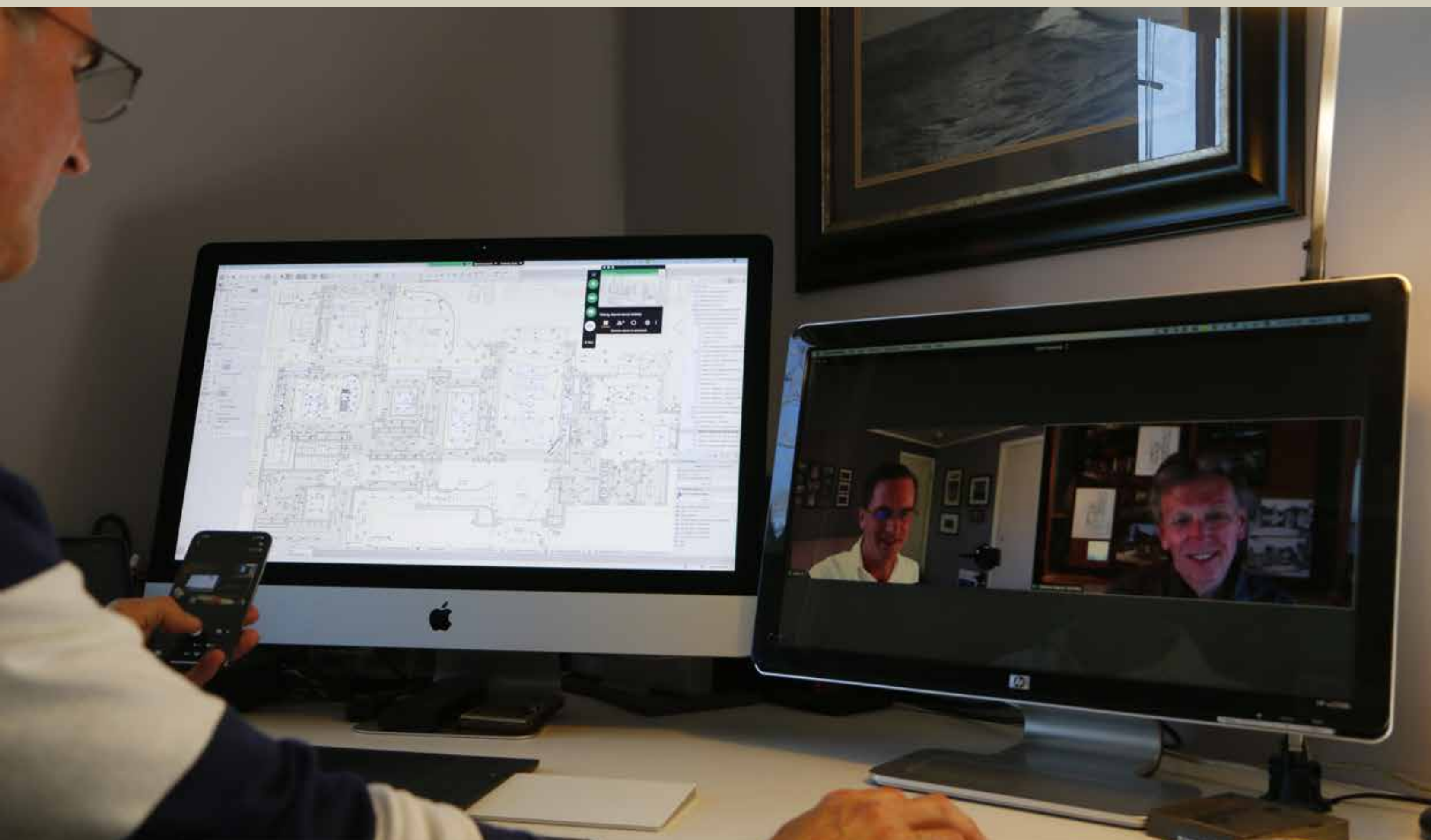
2. Chart a Path to **Your Preferred Future**

3. Establish Your **Budget**

4. Effectively Interviewing **Architectural Candidates**

5. Leverage Your Architect to **Assemble Rest of the Team**

6. Assess Your **Readiness Level**



If you'd like to get a more detailed review,  
book a 1:1 Clarity Call with our Architects:  
[Get your free 1:1 Clarity Call today](#)

1

# Understanding The Design Process



Before you choose your architect, it's important that you have a basic understanding of what's broadly involved so you are prepared to evaluate your shortlist candidate's offered services.

While all full-service Architects should follow a similar path, AOME's process begins with a two-step **Pre-Design phase** that must be completed before we commence the subsequent five advanced design phases.

## Pre-Design Phase

**Step 1** Requisites & Opportunities Brief  
(Feasibility Level 1 included)

**Step 2** Conceptual Design Analysis, Level 1 or 2, and/or Feasibility Study, Level 2 or 3

Be wary of Architects who rush past these first two steps of Pre-Design.



By breaking the process out this way, AOME offers you a high-value but low-cost way to further evaluate whether we are the right choice for your project before the larger more expensive design processes begin.

## Architectural Design Process

- Phase 1** Design: Schematic development of Steps 1 & 2 concepts
- Phase 2** Permitting: Permit drawings, permit review
- Phase 3** Construction Documents: Working drawings, technical documents, details
- Phase 4** Construction: Building and contract management
- Phase 5** Completion: Final review(s), occupancy



# 2

**Chart Your Path to  
a Preferred Future**





You are on a mission to change course from your family's default future in your current home to a bright new preferred future that will unfold in the embrace of your luxury dream home.

To get there, you and your architect need to understand what motivates such a bold decision.

This is a time for big picture thinking:

- 1. Characterize your current living circumstances, and anything you believe is about to change in both the short and long term.**
- 2. Describe your typical day, and your ideal day.**
- 3. How do you envision your life in the home of your dreams?**
- 4. How will you measure the success of your dream home? Imagine what is different for you and your family members.**
- 5. Our homes can be a reflection of ourselves — what should your dream home convey to friends and the community?**
- 6. What is your desired budget? What is your ideal timeframe? (We will help you tighten these up in due course if you don't know)**





If you'd like to get a more detailed review,  
book a **1:1 Clarity Call** with our Architects:  
[Get your free 1:1 Clarity Call today](#)



# 3

## **Establishing your Budget**





You may believe you have no business determining the budget for construction\* since you are new to all of this — but nothing could be further from the truth. You do have responsibility to share your budget goals with your architect. But how should you go about being sure it is at least somewhat realistic?

At the early stages the only valid means of projecting construction budgets employs cost per square foot metrics. So if you have even a rough idea of the size range for your dream home you can calculate your projected budget for construction based upon regional industry trends:

- **In the Pacific Northwest those trends start at \$650/SF for simpler building types with a blend of average and premium finishes.**
- **For more complex building types and somewhat higher finish choices plan for \$900/SF**
- **For complex buildings types (elaborate traditional styles and ultra contemporary styles) and more premium finishes throughout you need to plan for in excess of \$1,200/SF**

\* We will help you assess the other costs beyond construction cost that should also be accounted for in your project budget





If you'd like to get a more detailed review,  
book a **1:1 Clarity Call** with our Architects:  
[Get your free 1:1 Clarity Call today](#)



# 4

## Preparing to Interview Architects



Here is a list of suggested questions your architect candidates should be able to answer in a way that resonates for you:

**Why have you chosen to focus your practice on custom residential architecture?**

**What is your process for understanding what we want for our dream home?**

**What is your design process? How will it assure the design will meet or exceed expectations?**

**How do you handle our budget? Will you let me know if my preferred budget is (un)realistic?**

**What is your design timeline? Will you help me determine if my overall timeline is (un)realistic?**

**How do you engage and collaborate with our General Contractor, Interior Designer, Landscape Architect and others on our consulting team?**

**And, importantly, how will you help us with selecting these team members?**

**What will need you from us to deliver a successful project?**



5

**Assembling your  
Dream Team!**



The Architect is **always** the best choice to assist you with assembling the design consultant and contracting team. You've already charged them with establishing the big picture for design, and it is they who will lead the project team through the process — who better to help you select their collaborating partners?

If you have some preferred potential team members to introduce your architect to, be open to your architect critically evaluating if they are a good fit with the other members of the team — and consider suggested alternatives.

It is important to start off on the right foot with your candidates. Your architect will help you devise an ethical and fair interview process with 1-3 candidates. They should organize the interview process to make best use of your time, and prepare you for what to expect, what to ask, and afterwards give you an unbiased debrief, including helping you to normalize any apples/oranges comparisons that crop up.

Then, just as you did with your architect, your primary role is to judge the chemistry with each candidate. If your architect has done a good job identifying the candidates and setting the interviews up, you will know who to choose.





If you'd like to get a more detailed review,  
book a **1:1 Clarity Call** with our Architects.

[Get your free 1:1 Clarity Call today](#)



6

**Your Readiness  
Level**





There are five primary factors that can help you rank your readiness level to know where you are in the beginning stages of the dream home design process — and if you are ready to engage an architect.

Select your answers considering 0 = not sure to 9 = very confident

How clear are you on exactly what you need?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

How much do you know about the various options your property can accommodate?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

How confident are you that you are aware of the legal constraints for your property?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

How aware are you of the process to get the project completed on time and on budget?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

How aware are you of the process to get the project completed on time and on budget?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Rate your current overall feeling of readiness vs. uncertainty.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9



## **Tally your readiness quotient:**

**≤25**

You are still in the research phase, particularly if you don't have a property identified yet. A Brief Preliminary Consultation with an architect can help you to move forward with your project.

**26-40**

You may be ready to begin the Pre-Design process after sharing more information with your architect candidates.

**41 +**

You are ready to hire a residential architect to start the Pre-Design process, and begin seeing your custom home become a reality.







**Ready to Build  
your Dream Home?**

Get your free 1:1 Clarity Call  
with AOME Architects today

[Get your free 1:1 Clarity Call today](#)

(206) 622-3304

[AOMEArchitects.com](http://AOMEArchitects.com)