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Design Development: The Reality

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So, what is design development? Very simply, it is the phase of a project in which already established and approved design concepts are turned into definitive design solutions. Sounds pretty straightforward, right? Well it can be, or should be, but it requires that the plan and spatial volumes remain as agreed on in earlier phases, approved and signed-off by the client, and strictly adhered to by everyone involved in the project—from the client side and the design side, both. Once this occurs, the team can concentrate on taking the approved concepts and developing them into actual design solutions. The design development phase will succeed only if earlier phases—programming and schematic designs —are smooth and complete, and if both the design team and the client adhere strictly to the parameters—that is, move the design forward, not revisit already approved concepts. The goal is to document ideas on paper so effectively that the participants in the project can, as a team, turn a design vision into a real space.

THE DESIGN DEVELOPMENT "MIND SET"

During the design development phase of the project, designers require a great amount discipline. They must remember that this is the point in the project where the ideas created in the conceptual design phase are executed— and not where new ideas should spring up. The "it's never too late for a good idea" approach can be very detrimental to the project schedule and the design fee, unless an adjustment to the schedule and or/fee is negotiated. No matter how good an idea may be, a late change should only be entertained with the full knowledge of the client and an extension in the schedule. Otherwise, what often happens is that the design team either donates personal hours or erodes the fee in order to revise drawings, get approvals, and play catch-up in order to keep a job on schedule.