



Collaboration is key to a successful construction project

Published: Friday, May 11, 2012, 10:41 AM



By **Staten Island Advance**

Describing the role an architect plays in society is no easy task. His or her work encompasses many aspects of the construction industry, community involvement, planning, an understanding of the arts, ecology and so on.

In the Renaissance period, architects like Brunelleschi (the Duomo of Florence) and Michelangelo (Piazza del Campidoglio) understood construction, had refined art sensibilities and fearlessly fostered innovations as they constantly expanded their areas of interest armed with drawing skills and an insatiable curiosity.

While things have changed in the last 500 years, the qualities that inspire members of this profession to improve our built environment remain. The American Institute of Architects (AIA), was established in 1857. The largest professional association of architects, it sets standards, leads professionals to pursue higher design goals and objectives that aim to improve communities, and engage in global issues.



Photos Courtesy of David Businelli

David Businelli RA, AIA, of Studio 16, was the architect responsible for the reconstruction of the dining room of the Marina Cafe, Great Kills. He visited the site during the framing phase to check the progress of construction and oversaw the project to completion, bringing the initial concept between client and architect to fruition. Businelli is a past New York State president of AIA and past president of the association's Staten Island Chapter.



Many Staten Islanders have become acquainted with an architect due to the large amount of

construction the borough has experienced. The prevalent image is of the professional who prepares the plans and processes the paperwork.

But, beyond the tedious aspects of form-filling and plan reviews with municipal authorities, is the interaction between architect and client, a collaboration designed to create spaces that will be appreciated for many years, and perhaps over a lifetime. □

PREPARING THE PLANS □

The preparation of plans for a residential project is a collective effort by the architect and the client. It isn't magic or a mystery. Once retained, the architect becomes a filter, translating the client's needs and dreams into drawn plans. The conversation between client and architect transforms rudimentary diagrams into detailed building components.

In the case of a small residential project, the collaboration usually begins in the client's home, where it's easier to discuss and physically point to areas of interest. Behind the obvious requests of "I need a larger kitchen, another bathroom, etc.," the connectivity of these new spaces to the rest of the home has to be resolved, much like solving a puzzle.

Some of these puzzles are easy, some more challenging. There may be structural issues to address involving building code, or there may be issues of personal preference. During the design phase, the architect takes a methodical approach, seeking to draw out as much information as possible.

For example, the client who seeks to create a sunny, relaxing spot to drink her coffee in the morning has a very specific request. The architect/client collaborative spirit is at its best when these desires are revealed so they can be translated into architecture. □

CONSTRUCTION

Construction begins after a permit for the work has been issued. So does the client's anxiety. It's a natural reaction when propelled into construction mode to feel anxious about the disruption to one's home, the stream of workers in and out and the seemingly constant request to write checks. At that point it's very hard to imagine what the finished product will be.

Architects involved in the construction phase of a project will oversee aspects of the construction and time schedules. And like a successful team coach, they'll also be on hand to offer reassurance that things are moving along on the right path.

It usually isn't until after the wallboard (Sheetrock) has been installed that the first smiles begin to show. When the client sees their dream go from concept to drawing to becoming an actual defined space, they can fully appreciate the role the architect has played in its becoming a

reality.</tail>Architect's Corner, written by members of the Staten Island Chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA), appears twice a month in Home.

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