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KITCHEN PLANNING

The kitchen is one of the most complex spaces in our homes today. At it's basic level, this one room has to provide for storage space, preparation space, cooking space, and cleaning space, that's quite a lot of activity for one room. But in today's kitchen we often also find entertainment space, office space, kids space, and so much more. In addition to all the functional requirements, each family and family member has their own personal needs. Given all the functions and requirements that are crammed into this one room, it is more than beneficial to give a little thought to planning, it is essential.

To help you and your family better understand and communicate your needs and requirements, as well as your dreams and vision, we have developed this planning guide. Spend some time going through and thinking about the questions that follow and you will find you have a much better focused idea of what your kitchen should be whether you are building a new kitchen from scratch or remodeling your existing kitchen into something new.

When you are ready it useful for you, and for us, to write out your responses to the questions in the guide. This tends to focus your thoughts further as well as document them and help you communicate them to your architect. Since this guide is general in nature and projects are specific, not all areas may apply to your particular case. You can safely ignore those sections. Similarly, there may be an issue particular to your project that is not address by this guide. If that is the case, be sure to provide that information as well.

Beyond all, have fun thinking and dreaming about your new kitchen.

GENERAL

Typically, as architects, we try to consider the broader issues before delving deeper into the details. When planning for a new space, this is no different. So lets start with the broad considerations:

- How do you use your kitchen (just for cooking, occasional meal, professional cooking, family gathering space, study area, work area, bill paying, breakfasts)
- How much time do you spend in the kitchen each day?
- Is the time spent in the kitchen different for different members of the family?
- From the first item above, which is the primary use for your kitchen?
- How do you envision the kitchen space/personality (sleek, modern, traditional, warm, country, something else)?
- Is the total existing space large enough? Too large?
- Are there doors which are in the way or which are missing?
- If the kitchen is too small, can it be extended into adjacent spaces? Which ones?
- Are you satisfied with the relationship to the dinning room or other eating areas?
- Are you satisfied with the relation to the outside space(s)? What are the outside space(s)?
- How do groceries enter the kitchen?
- How is the existing lighting (style, brightness, locations, natural light)?
- Are there enough power outlets?
- What is the single worst thing about your existing kitchen?
- What is the single best thing about your existing kitchen?

- What would you change about each of the following: Floor, Lighting, Appliances, Counter/work space, Storage, Traffic flow?
- Please describe how hard are you and your family are on your kitchen (wear and tear)?
- What would you like to show off in your new kitchen?
- What would you like to hide?
- How much money do you have to spend on your kitchen?
- If you were to pick a single luxury item for your kitchen what would it be?
- Are there any materials you would especially like, or dislike, to have in the kitchen (tile, marble, stainless steel, glass, wood, concrete, other)

WHAT COULD BE CHANGED

If you are planning a new kitchen, now is the time to dream. Start by pretending that money is no object and consider what would you like to improve, replace, or add to your current kitchen. This is useful, even if you are going to build a completely new kitchen. The goal is to free yourself from preconceived notions of what is possible, you never know some of these dreams may not be as difficult as you think. Consider the following:

- Shape of the existing room
- Architectural features
- Amount of daylight
- Layout of cabinetry
- Upgrade major appliances
- Increase the number or location of power outlets
- Redesign lighting
- Relocate plumbing
- Reorganize available storage space
- Change size or height of counters
- Change/replace countertop materials
- Change/replace flooring
- Change/replace wall coverings/back splashes
- Change cabinet style
- Change/replace furniture
- Change/replace window coverings
- Decrease noise levels
- Increase/decrease connection to other spaces in the home

FOOD STORAGE

While we all think about cooking when thinking about our kitchens, the first function the kitchen must perform is storing food. Before we can cook, we must bring food supplies into our home and must be able to store those supplies until ready for use.

- What types of food do you cook with predominately (fresh, frozen, chilled, dried, preserved, canned, other)?
- Do you have enough refrigerator space, freezer space, cabinet space, to house your preferred ingredients?
- If you prepare your meals in advance and freeze them, do you have enough freezer space?
- Do you need more than an average amount of storage space?
- Do you buy items in bulk and need additional space to keep large packages, cans, bottles?
- Do you store bottles of good wine and need an even temperature site away from the stove?
- Do you require a wine cooler?
- Are your storage facilities (pantry, refrigerator, freezer) located close to your food preparation area?
- Are items of food well organized so they are easy to find?

- Are there items which are hard to reach, either very high or very low?
- Do you have children and require some food storage areas out of their reach?

NON-FOOD STORAGE AND EQUIPMENT

Of course, along with the storage of food goes the storage of other, non edible supplies and equipment. In fact, for most of us, these items occupy a larger portion of our kitchen than food storage.

- Make a list of the kitchen equipment that you currently have and plan to use in your new kitchen, include the approximate dimensions (width | depth | height).
- Are there pieces of equipment that you do not currently own that you plan to add to your kitchen? Be sure to make a list of those items as well.
- Do you prefer your equipment/appliances stored in view or hidden from view?
- Are there any less frequently used items? Which ones?
- Are every day preparation items within easy reach of food preparation areas?
- Are cooking utensils stored within easy reach of the stove?
- Are cutting boards and knives stored near the food preparation area?
- Are pans and baking trays stored near the oven?
- Are your day to day plates, glasses, and cutlery close to the eating area or close to the dishwasher? Which would you prefer?
- Is there space to store non-food associated items such as cleaning supplies?
- Are there any special items to be stored or displayed? What are they?
- Where do you keep cookbooks and recipes?
- Do you need a radio, television in the kitchen?
- Do you need a telephone in the kitchen?
- If you need a telephone in the kitchen do you also need a message center?
- Do you need a computer in the kitchen?
- Do you need a mail center?

PREPARATION AND COOKING SPACES

How we intend to use a kitchen should determine how we arrange the spaces in the kitchen. Different activities are best completed when the space is well suited to their performance. Spend awhile thinking about the following items:

- How much day to day wear are your food preparation counters subject to? Are you cooking large meals every day or heating up items in a microwave?
- Would you like counters of differing heights to suit different cooks or tasks?
- Would you like counters made from different materials to suit different cooking tasks, such a cool smooth slab of marble for pastry?
- What type of cooking fuel do you prefer (gas, electric, convection, induction other)?
- Do you require a stove with extra features such as barbecue grill, wok?
- Do you have a preferred type of ventilation system (downdraft, overhead hood, through the wall)?
- What major equipment do you require (range, cooktop, wall oven, refrigerator, separate freezer, dishwasher, trash compactor, microwave, warming oven, other)?
- How large a sink is needed (single bowl, double, triple, other)?
- Of what material do you prefer your sink to be made?
- Do you require a prep sink? Where would you like it located?
- What style refrigerator do you prefer (top mount, bottom mount, side by side, drawers)
- Do you want water/ice through the door of the refrigerator?
- How large a refrigerator do you require?
- How many burners should your stove have?
- How many ovens do you require?

- Do you have any particular plumbing needs (pot filler at the stove, sprayer, insta-hot, other)?

FOOD PREPARATION

Now, on to the star of the show, the task the kitchen is made to do. Since a kitchen is for cooking, any kitchen design must consider how you cook.

- Do you prepare your own food?
- Do you cook mainly with fresh food that requires a lot of preparation space or a high proportion of convenience foods?
- How often do you cook?
- Do you eat out frequently?
- Do you eat leftovers frequently?
- Is there one cook at a time, two, more?
- How many people cook at the same time?
- Do children prepare food?
- Are you a sociable cook who prefers facing into the room while cooking or would facing the wall or a window be preferable?
- Do you cook regularly for more than five people? If so is your oven large enough or would a double oven or heavy-duty range be more suitable.
- What is the most elaborate meal that you've ever cooked?
- What is the most elaborate meal you can imagine yourself cooking?

DINING

Once the cooking is done, what else should we do but serve and eat the wonderful meal just prepared. The kitchen still has a role, here. It could be only as a springboard to serving in a formal dining room or it can serve as the dining room itself. Some things to think about:

- Do you want to eat in the kitchen or would you rather eat in a separate room?
- What meals do you specifically want to eat in the kitchen?
- How many people do you want to be able to seat on a day to day basis?
- Is the table located in a convenient space with good natural light?
- Is a hardwearing tabletop an important requirement?
- Do you want to entertain in the informal surrounding of the kitchen? For how many typically?
- How often do you entertain? How many people typically?

CLEANING UP

Once the meal is done, we must clean up so that we are ready for the next occasion. A well planned kitchen will take this into account and make the task easier.

- Is there an appropriate landing space for dirty dishes and cookware?
- Do you have items that have to be washed by hand?
- What is the largest item to be washed in the sink?
- Do you have/want a dishwasher?
- What should the view be while washing dishes?
- How convenient is dish and glass storage to the washing area?
- Do you require a garbage disposal? How often do you use one? Are you on a septic system?
- How much trash do you have each week typically?
- Do you recycle? If so, what items and how much each week?
- Do you compost? If so, how much each week?