**EPISODE 4 – ARCH 3**

**STORY**

**Curtis:** Welcome back to your Project Shepherd podcast. Last week we ended with Heather beginning to accept the possibility that she might be in over her head with a list of things that need to be done and permits that need to be acquired. Making all that happen seems close to impossible. Suddenly, she remembers seeing a sign down the road of a home designer that she follows on Instagram, finally admitting that she can't do it all, she decides to pop into their office.

After all, she already has the plans she bought on the Internet. And surely they can work with those plans and get things moving in the right direction. Walking through the door and seeing the drawings and the photos on the wall, she immediately feels better. A man hops up to greet her and introduces himself as Rick, one of the designers at the firm.

Heather rolls out her plans on the table, shows them to Rick, and explains the situation. Rick nods his head. He's seen this kind of mistake before. And Heather starting to feel better. Things are going to turn around for her. And Brian, as Rick says, that he can work with his plans. Then Rick's questions start. Have they gotten a new survey?

Well, just the one from the title company at closing. Rick says, no, he's going to need more information than that. A new survey is going to have topography, trees, and elevations, and that's going to cost about 5000 dollars. Next, does she have a geotechnical report? Nope. What's that? Rick says a Geotech report is a fancy name for soil testing and that the city requires it.

Basically, they need someone to drill holes in the ground and analyze the soil type. And that's going to cost another 1200 dollars. Has she checked the building setbacks to make sure her plans will settle on the lot? Has anyone reviewed the deed restrictions to make sure this type of house is even allowed in the neighborhood? Nope. As he scans the plans, Rick says he's done work in this neighborhood before and he's pretty sure they require all the houses to have at least 51% brick, which these plans don't have.

And being a corner lot, the setbacks probably won't work with this plan's dimensions. Additionally, the new maps that came out after a recent hurricane put this whole neighborhood in a floodplain, which means the house will need to be elevated about three feet off the ground with a crawl space foundation. These plans are for a house meant to be built on a concrete slab.

Finally, Rick tells her that the House's architectural committee has the final say and all home designs in the neighborhood. And given the style, he doubts they're even going to approve these plans. Realizing these plans are basically useless, she asked Rick how much he would charge just to start from scratch and design something new. Rick begins running down the numbers.

They charge $200 a square foot to design the new house. And based on her 3500 square foot plans, that puts it around $7,000 plus engineering costs and other expenses like the Survey and Geotech report. Heather is blown away, this is a lot more than the 750 bucks they paid for their online plans. Rick assures her this is a good ray and it's below average for what the other designers are charging in the area.

Plus, once the plans are complete, he will also refer them to three builders so she can get free competitive bids later that night. Heather is talking about the ups and downs of the day with Brian and they wonder how they could make so many bad decisions. They hope they can dig themselves out of this hole before the baby comes, but they're not sure.

They're both smart people. How do they allow themselves to be taken advantage of this many times and in such a short amount of time?

The reality is they now own this property and the process has started. Their options are at this point the try to sell the house full of holes in the roof and the side, or just push forward and make it work. They're not the type of people to back away from a challenge or give up. So they decide to move forward with the design of the new house.

Brian agrees with Heather that Rick's prices sound high, so the next morning he calls around to some other local architects and designers. It turns out that Rick's quote is a lot lower than the competition's. So they decide to go out and sign his contract and move forward with Rick.

So they have a first meeting with Rick's company and it was brief but seemingly productive. And they write him a check for a 50% deposit. About three months go by and they barely hear anything from Rick other than a few minor questions via email. But after bugging him for updates, they finally got the news that their plans are ready. So they head over to Rick's office with fresh hope.

The plans must be really good since this took so long. Rick presents them with a 4800 square foot house that is much different than their original plans. Brian looks to Rick and says, How can you give us a house that's 1300 square feet bigger than our original plans? We can't afford this. Rick reviews his notes and reminds them that during their first meeting, they insisted the house has to have a big game room, a meeting room, a study, and five bedrooms.

And he adds, there's no way that he can squeeze all of that into 3500 square feet. In fact, he's pretty proud of himself for squeezing that into 4800 square feet. So now they're torn between getting everything they want in the house and spending more money. But they decide to accept the drawings and ask what's next. Next, Rick says, is structural and civil engineering.

I've already gotten two proposals from local engineers: The first one is about $17500, and the second one is about $20500. The difference, he says, is that the more expensive one is from a pretty well-known firm here in town that tends to overengineer everything. A lot of builders complain that these designs drive up prices. The other company's newer, but they have been doing a lot of work for some production builders out in the suburbs.

So since everything has been costing more than they originally planned on, Brian and Heather choose the cheaper option because, hey, if this company is doing a lot of work for these big national builders, they must be okay. So while they're happy too happy to be moving forward, although at a slower pace, than they planned on, they are feeling their anxiety really start to ramp up.

They're now out of pocket over $30,000. They've already begun to dip into their cash reserves. And with baby number two on the way, they consider the very real possibility that Heather might have to stop working prior to her due date. Her first pregnancy ended with a month of bed rest. But back then, Brian's salary was enough to cover them.

Plus, they weren't just bleeding money during that last pregnancy either. Hopefully, though, now that they've reached out for help, they'll start making better choices. But they've already lost a large chunk of their savings and they have some hard decisions ahead.

**INTERVIEW**

**Curtis:** Hi everyone. Welcome back to another episode of **The Your Project Shepherd Podcast**.

[INTRODUCTION]

**Curtis:** Today, we are a little more crowded than usual at the table because I have two guests, we have Bryson white and Garrett Delano. Let's say it right this time. Yeah, I get it. I screwed it up last night. Hey guys

**Arc3:** Hey

**Curtis:** We're going to get into the topic today about the *design process* and who better to talk to about that than a couple of Architects? So Bryson and Garrett, have run Arc 3 for What about four years now?

**Arc Three:** 4 years in July

**Curtis:** All right, and so they've been out, they've been in the business for about 10 years, and they actually met at the University of Houston in architecture school. Is that right?

**Arc Three:** That's right?

**Curtis:** Yeah. All right, and then he works at another firm together for a while before you start it off on your own.

**Garrett:** Well, I worked for a big commercial firm downtown for one year right after school and he went and joined a company that was in called Hermes, and then after that one year, I jumped ship and joined him, and it was a name change for that firm and we worked together at that firm for five years together before starting our own company.

**Curtis:** All right, Yeah, so you guys do Residential design, but you also still do some commercial. You mention that you had commercial backgrounds, you currently do both.

**Garrett:** Yeah, we do both, are split right now I've actually heavily heavier on commercial than residential, but we have a really strong passion for residential so we're actively growing that market for ourselves.

**Curtis:** Yep, and I've seen some great projects that you guys have done, and I've consulted on some too, so they do great work. So I first met these guys about a year or so ago, I had seen some of their work on social media and I thought it looked really fantastic and their offices, were pretty close to mine here so I decided to hit him up for coffee and in visiting with them, I saw pretty quickly that they are doing things the right way and I knew that we should do anything and everything that we can to try to work together. So over the last year as I said we've been sold it on some projects together, but we haven't built a house together yet and I hope we get to change that pretty soon. That's right. So, let's get into our story about Brian and Heather are a couple that we were reading about or listening about just a quick recap of where we're at on that.

They are at that stage in life, where they're having kids, they're getting ready to get out of the small little Bungalow that they bought when we first got married. You know, go to bigger house, better schools you know slide into that middle class dream scenario. Yeah, and so they've been putting in their homework, they stayed up late and I will get a plans on the internet. They you know, pinning stuff on Pinterest and saving stuff on Instagram, picked out a good floor plan and all the research, you know, like the average cost to build a house - all that good stuff. Yeah. Except Now they're finding out, they may have made some wrong turns. Maybe they bought like a for sale by owner, a lot in a neighborhood that flooded didn't know anything about that. They hired a demolition company to start tearing the house down got busted for not having permits, and then, they found out that their internet plans aren't going to work, so they wouldn't be talking to a house designer. So that guy designs a house, and he comes to them, and with this awesome plan and they're like, whoa, this is like way bigger than what we were expecting, it is more expensive than what we were expecting. So I'm not sure about you all, but I'm pretty shocked at how things turned out there.

**Garrett:** Oh yeah, I'm just flabbergasted.

**Curtis:** So, let's start off with an easy question here. Why shouldn't you buy a house plan on the internet? Big softball question to start with.

**Bryson:** Well, number one. I mean, that plan is not designed for your site. I mean, that's probably the biggest one you have to make sure that you're, you know, the house actually fits with the deed restrictions or the HOA that the neighborhood may have and so I would think that that's number one. Then the other thing is just the overall size and shape may not fit the site.

Like a lot of the times, we like to design a site, or a house based off of its existing conditions, and be able to maximize its efficiency based off the site, maybe take advantage of the site and its views, you know…

**Garrett:** …and plans on the internet just completely neglect the guess the Part of Designing, a home, and it also leaves a lot to the imagination. In terms of detail. Most of those sets are just a handful of sheets and they're not really descriptive and they may be at the neglect of the climate, you know who knows where this house is supposed to be designed. So there's a number of reasons why you should not buy plans on the unit and those are just a few

**Curtis:** Is there a market for those, some here in some world?

**Bryson:** Somewhere in the very far-out reaches of the world. I mean, like, in like, places that do not have a neighborhood or places that do not have an HOA.

**Curtis:** So if I was building a house in the middle of Nebraska and middle of the field and I’ve got this floor plan

**Bryson:** Sure, Yes

**Garrett:** Mediterranean style

**Curtis:** Yes, exactly. Turrets and columns

**Bryson:** Yeah. Exactly the whole thing. Yeah, yeah, yeah. But that would be where that would be a safe bet that you could technically build that. But again, it depends on the region to because, you know, it may not be the best plan for when you're a…

**Garrett:** You know, maybe a flood plain, but the plans are slab on grade and right, exactly those things and exam, and I would also say that anybody who is not really interested in, A higher level of design mean knock yourselves out. That's it's not for everybody to go through the process of hiring an architect and a contractor that could be in sync together.

**Curtis:** Right? Yep. We'll talk more about that in a minute. Yeah, I guess one thing that those plans have going for them is they are cheap at least

**Garrett:** Right, I mean, they are affordable

**Bryson:** They are affordable.

**Curtis:** I'm sure you guys have heard that Architects are expensive.

**Garrett:** I have heard that. Yes, that's the word on the street.

**Curtis:** So does it help speed the process up? If they bring those plans, do you like if somebody's like, hey, I got these plans on the internet. What do you can you all just like modify? Those is that help?

**Garrett:** Well, I mean, has, personally we do not, we do not work on plans that come in handed to us

**Bryson:** And that's based off of experience. You know, when we first started, we were like, yeah, sure. We'll take those on, and it actually ends up being a worse outcome and takes longer and cost us more money in order to do something like that. Because your piecemealing something that was not meant to be that way, and so at the end of the day, you end up with a plan that doesn't resemble the original plan that they fell in love with and at the end of the day we could have designed a plan from scratch that would have been better and more suited to their family than just buying is that a plan?

**Garrett:** And I think just fundamentally the way that we work as we work inside out. So we start with the plan first, a lot of those plans on the Internet or more focused toward reaching an exterior aesthetic first and then forcing the plan to work

**Curtis:** Right

**Garrett:** So it's working out. Side in which, you know, trying to move one piece of, it has all kinds of domino effects on both the exterior and the interior plan and so it would slow the process down and ultimately, you know cost more time and energy to modify those plans to just start something from scratch.

**Curtis:** Yeah. Yeah. So yes, the right way is to find your site and then gather the data first, you have to know all those things that go into, you know what's the tool kit that I can pool from here.

**Garrett:** Right, that's right. I mean, if you had a set of plans that, you know, let's say, like the right side of the house had, you know, for the front of the house had a large amount of glass, but very little overhang, but you buy a site where that elevation is facing Due West, you know, would you really want that know? You wouldn't write this out. So there are all kinds of things about a particular site that are Portent, you know, site orientation climate context surrounding trees or neighbors or other adjacent buildings. All those things play a Part.

**Curtis:** Yep. So back to the story briefly I'll give their designer a little credit here. Once they came to him, he did kind of get them pointed in the right direction. He gathered all the information, they needed their surveys, the soil test, the deed restrictions, all that kind of stuff which is the first thing that you should do. But aside from looking at those plans they bought and cramming all the rooms they said they wanted into the design. He didn't really listen to them, and he didn't really communicate with them and in the end, they ended up with a house that was thousand square feet bigger than what they wanted and what they could afford even, and so how often during that design process? Should the client and the architect be talking and collaborating like what does that back-and-forth? Look Like for you?

**Bryson:** Well yeah, I would say that typically when a client comes to us and we asked them, you know, what are you looking for in a home? How do you live in your house? I mean, a lot of those things take in, we take that into consideration, and then when they're giving us a program list, you know, they want an exercise room, they want to win the room, they want all these things and you go down the list, you know, you can only fit all that in a certain size square footage. And a certain size square footage, also reflects the budget and so You know, when they tell us what their budget is and what the square footage that they're looking for right away, we can tell if is it a realistic budget or a realistic project, and then from there, we're also designing the home and we try and fit as much as we can. But then we have to communicate to them and say like look you have a set budget and set square footage. If you really want these items, you're going to have to increase either or…

**Garrett:** I feel like we're we've gotten pretty comfortable doing that in sort of our initial fact-gathering our fact-finding mission that we do at the front end of a project; we have a new customer survey. We have a questionnaire that goes through all of the questions in the first couple of questions are you know what your overall size was and your budget? Do you have a Contractor on board? And so that those first answers really we could get into a lot of the nitty-gritty before we design a home that you want to go through the process first if it's not realistic, but I mean right away, Bryson is right, we're able to say, you know, this side of the home that you're describing. Think this questionnaire is not 3,000 square feet is 4,500 square feet and this is what that's going to cost. So we try to have that conversation very early.

**Curtis:** Yeah, I think people don't know what they don't know and so I you might propose another solution that they hadn't thought of right? And that goes back to coming to you already having a set of floor plans they found somewhere that may be that may work, but that may not be the best thing for their family either.

**Bryson:** Well and that's another thing that I've noticed on like online bought more plans, is that some of the plans are kind of maze-like, you know, they're fitting a bunch of pieces to fit the elevation, as your head mentioned, but the other aspect of it is they're saying, oh, I've got a 3,000 square foot house. That's got five bedrooms four baths, but then if you really look into it, these bedrooms are like ten by ten, you know, or they're super small, and it's like, you realize that that's a really small house even though it's got the bedrooms and the, you know, it's checking all the boxes. Yeah, I mean, so, oh, like we come into it and we're considering human scale, you know, like the way that you lived in this space what is comfortable to you like you could do a hallway that's three feet but that would feel really tight you know? And so a lot of these things are things that people take for granted or don't consider.

**Garrett:** And I will also say that you know, designing a home for yourself, it should be a, should be a very enjoyable experience, and with at the end of the day, you should live in the house, and it should reflect the way you actually want to live so I should it should be. It should fit custom similar to. If I were going to get a suit, I got a suit tailored for myself. It fits my measurements. And homes online or would be accustomed to like the JC Penney suit. You know, there's your line to fit the masses is that doesn't really it may. It may, you can force your way in and kind of make it work, but at the end of the day, you want something that is customizable and accustomed to you the way you are.

**Curtis:** That's okay. I mean, there's a, there's a, there's a place for everything right? Not everybody can or should go through that process. Some people should and get just buy a house that's already built or yeah, but you know, for those who want to go through the process and who want something really custom, there's a right way to do it. That's right and starting with the online stuff is not the right way to do it. So, your survey that you send out, talk more about that, is that just Is that asking lifestyle questions. Like how do you use the rooms? How do you want the rooms to relate to each other?

**Garrett:** Sure we're trying to find like, what are the, you know, what are the adjacencies? The spatial relationships that are important to them, you know, is it important to you to have your children's bedroom? Close to yours or do you on the other side of the house?

**Curtis:** Another side of the house

**Garrett:** Yeah, they try to find out those questions. Like how do you cook? How often are you cooking? Is a, is that a big part of your life and, you know, how do you want to eat? How do you want to spend your downtime? Where do you watch TV? All of these things at play are important factors.

**Curtis:** Yeah, what kind of activities do you like to be outside? You want, you know?

**Garrett:** Yeah, if I get up and I like to read in the morning and drink coffee, you know, maybe that room is better served on the east side of the house. So it's going a really nice warm, natural morning sunlight to fill that room with, with light, instead of it being on the other side of the house. Where it's, it's not bright in the morning. Yes. Oh, all of those things are things that an architect is really considering

**Curtis:** So during that that at the very beginning you gather that information with the survey and having those conversations up front, but once the design process is underway, you know, how often are you checking in kind of, you know, tell people who are listening and watching like what are the steps and how many meetings generally do you have during that process?

**Bryson:** Yes. So I guess the first meeting actually happens after we send out the questionnaire so we send that questionnaire out and we kind of get it and we say let's schedule a meeting to kind of review that questionnaire and we go question my question just so that we can get some elaboration that may not be written down because sometimes the client will say something, we're like what do they mean by that? Right, and so we like to kind of go through that questionnaire and after that questionnaire gets done we then have a good understanding of kind of what the clients looking for, and so we'll do the first pass at a sketch of what the floor plan will be based on that questionnaire, and then we'll set up a meeting and kind of talk to the client about the first pass of that plan and then we'll get feedback from them what they like, what they dislike and then do a revision of that plan, and then once it gets finalized, within start to build the house in 3D and that's where we elevate it in our computer software where we're showing them what it actually looks like and a lot of the stuff that we're showing them is realistic. So it kind of Gives them a very good visual because a lot of people that we find are not used to seeing a floor plan in 2D, they can't interpret. You know it's their very visual, and most people are and so it's you know, so we like to show them how it's actually going to look, and we find that most people are very receptive to that you know you know if I show them a plan that's a box on a sheet of paper they're like okay I see that. But what does that mean? What does that look like? And so we're able to graphically show them what that's going to look like and feel and then once that design process is finished with elevating showing them with the interior. With the exterior is going to look like that. We play with materials, we show them like okay this could be brick, this could be Stone you know, and kind of really hone in on what that final design is like then that gets approved, and then we're ready to move into construction documents.

**Garrett:** So overall I would say that it's about Four to five meetings. Typically

**Bryson:** Yeah

**Garrett:** Throughout the design process, that length of time can vary, especially depending on decision-making, Yeah, I mean, it's not unusual to have, you know, a couple of passes on the sketching aspect before they really feel comfortable. We're sketching in order to keep the amount of time and energy, we spend on it, you know, less, get the sketching done first and give that up proof. So I would say overall you know four or five maybe even six meetings design process.

**Curtis:** You're also getting some like inspiration photos I assume during that process or some

**Bryson:** Further into the after, after the sketch after the sketch, once we get into the design, if we're, and it's more solute, suited to Interior items

**Garrett:** And I would think that I would disagree with you. I mean, I think that we, we try to get most of that. A lot of that stuff in the survey phase, but I mean Pinterest is definitely not a design tool, and I want to stress that it's not a design tool, but it's also not bad to use to kind of benchmark things that piqued your interest. It's not a bad thing at all.

**Bryson:** We tried to get some of those things before we get into sketching. Because while we do work inside out, we start with a plan first and we are working on that plan, we do have a general idea of what that can translate to on the outside so that's It's important to get those an understanding of that. Yeah, as long as that occurs

**Curtis:** It can be good to use that as like “hey, show me some pictures of some exteriors that you've seen that you like”, and even then, people may not know what it is that attracts them about that way.

**Curtis:** So, that's true. Do you like the windows here? Do you like them brick? Do you like the shape of the roof? What do you like about this? That's true. We do. We do get those pictures earlier. I mean, before we start the design process.

**Garrett:** Well also it is an eye-opener of like how educated a client is, I mean, we get a lot of people that say, I really want a contemporary home and they show us images

and you say well that’s really traditional - it's not contemporary whatsoever.

**Curtis:** Yeah. It's a modern Farmhouse.

**Bryson:** Yes. Exactly what it is. That's the way they want to. I do not like Farmhouse, and they show us images in this, like, you know, that's a farmhouse. I'm sorry.

**Bryson:** No, but I mean we do sometimes in the design process if we have an idea and we can't properly illustrate it to the client, we may sometimes find it image online that could help illustrate or bring that idea to, you know, to show them what it looks like.

**Curtis:** Yeah. So there are a lot of things that have to be taken into account. You know, when you're, when you're first starting, design; gathering that information, the site information, so, as you said, you can't always…You have to start with what I want and what's my budget, but at some point, that kind of transitions to “okay, what can I get?”

You have to have some limitations and be able to work within little bit of limitations.

0:20:19 So, in a perfect world, the ideal thing would be to have a team assembled before we even go to look at a property. Even that's like a perfect world like, hey, the architect and the Builder going to go jog out to the property and walk it before they even buy it, and that is ideal, but that rarely happens.

**Arc Three:** Right. Yep.

**Curtis:** Okay. So aside from great design, and guidance the things we touched on so far, what other services do you guys offer to clients that most people should take advantage of outside of design?

**0:20:53 Bryson:** Yeah, that would be construction administration for us. I mean, that's one of those things that kind of wish that we would just require because we have seen time and time again, that it's a necessity. I mean, a client does not know what they're looking at, when they go out on-site, and a lot of the time, not every contractor, but some contractors, let the subs run the job, you know, a contractor. You know, people think when they hire a general contractor that person is the one building the home and so they trust that person and everything. But what they really are doing is they're buying a person who has a collection or A bunch of people that they've worked with who are specializing in those in those areas, and so, if that person doesn't understand how they work it, sometimes, they just rely on them to just do it, and those guys don't always have the best craft or quality assurance.

**Curtis:** Especially if it was like a, like a new design or new technique they've never seen before there, they are like “oh my subs will figure it out.

**Bryson:** Yeah, and then the subs are like, well, this is the way I've always done it, and so, then you're having to go out and correct things and or it may be wrong, and which causes issues.

**Garrett:** Yeah, I mean construction Administration. Is that phase after the permit, when, when the house is actually being built, I think the advantage there is, *that we are the advocate for the client on-site.* So if they don't have us involved, then it's not uncommon for them to go out and find things that are really wrong, or two to not catch things that are really wrong and have the design or the building process doesn’t go very well. They do not know what they are looking for when they go out there on site, “well I mean I see the lumber going up, I see his lab and things must be going along fine” But if you don't have somebody out there, with a trained eye, things can really go wrong quickly and it's definitely a worthy investment to have us on site.

**Garrett:** It has that we want a combative relationship with a contractor, hopefully, everybody gets all along just smoothly but there are those times when you have a contractor on board who would rather the architect not be out there as much.

**Curtis:** Totally, I think this probably most of the time, unfortunately, right, yeah, one of the services that we offer with Shepherd is basically the same thing as an owner's representative where we're also doing phase checks and quality control walkthroughs and things like that, and I think the more sets of eyes that you can have on it, the better outcome that you're going to have. Even good builders make mistakes. I have made mistakes, even architects make mistakes, everybody makes mistakes - it's a human process. But the more sets of eyes you have on it, the chances of the right outcome are going to go up exponentially.

**Garrett:** Absolutely yeah - for example you want to tell them about…

**Bryson:** Yeah, so one of the reasons why it's so important is we had one project where you know, we had a roof that wasn't shingles, it was a concrete tile. An asphalt shingle I think it's like 300 pounds per square and the concrete tile was over a thousand pounds per square, meaning that the roof framing had to be beefier, and so it wasn't a 2x6 rafter, it was a 2x8 rafter, and we went out on site and this was like, you know, a 12,000 square foot house, so it's a huge roof and the framers had the entire roof framed. It looked great out there, we were doing our report and we're noticing framing things like windowsill heights being wrong, or headers being wrong and so we're catching all those things to make sure that things work correctly built, and then when we get onto the second floor, we noticed that the roof was framed with 2 by 6 and not with a 2 by 8, they framed that entire house with the wrong Rafters and we went down to the Superintendent…

**Garrett:** I that was like a six or seven thousand square foot roof you know a 9 to 10 thousand sq foot house that is a 2-story.

**Bryson:** Yeah, and so we went and told the super who told the framers and they were not happy, they were not happy and I think that frame of would have been content to leave it. Honestly. Yeah, and they tried every way to leave it. I mean they were like “could we sister to two by sixes?” No. “Can we sister a 2x8 to a 2x6?” It's like well then, you're just wasting 2x6 Lumber right you know? Like you could rip the roof off and use that lumber on another job and that's what they ended up doing.

**Garrett:** They would have either caught it much further down the road when it would have been much more expensive to fix

**Bryson:** The roof collapsing…

**Garrett:** When the roofer came out there to install it and checked it OR yeah, they would have had a catastrophic failure.

**Bryson:** Well, I know the roofer, wouldn’t have caught it and the contractor, sure didn't catch it because that contractor was one that let the subs Drive the job!

**Garrett:** So that is the advantage of having a design, professional on-site because the client definitely would not have caught that, No

**Curtis:** Yeah, I mean, sometimes, when you stare at the same house all the time, but yeah, these are the same drawings of the time, share the same house, all the time, things kind of disappear. Having you guys come in and catch something like that is, I mean, it's huge for the homeowner. I would hope that's huge for the Builder too because that’s his liability if that thing falls down. I mean who's getting sued on that - It's going to be the builder, not the framer.

**Bryson:** Well, in the roof comes in like a day, I mean, yeah, and you would have had so much already framed and I mean, you already started putting windows and so that roof was like, hmm, that roof came in last too, on that project.

**Curtis:** and that in that roof was known about, I assume all the way back during design, so that's right. Wasn't something some new change, they just dropped in the middle of it, right? I mean that,

**Garrett:** I mean, that the plans are engineered, and the structural engineer had a full framing plan that called out 2 by 8 rafters.

**Curtis:** So aside from bad design decisions and bad real estate purchases, what are some other common mistakes we see people making if they're coming into this sort of custom home-building process?

**Garrett:** I think probably choosing the wrong people to be a part of the process, you know, taking somebody's advice, a friend of a friend has a guy who is a builder, and you know, not really understanding what goes behind. It's not the things in a house that you walk into that you see that are most important; it's the things that you don't see that are most important and bringing the right people to the table. It's the team that you can really trust is, you know, the top priority. It's important to get the right architect but it's equally maybe even more important to get the right Builder.

**Bryson:** Yeah, and I would also add to that just realistic expectations on the cost of things, you know, having someone who could, you know say “I like this style and I like this tile, I found it online” and then they find out it's not in our budget.

**Garrett:** It's a lot harder for somebody to have realistic expectations in today's market because price fluctuations are so crazy. Ask the random person on the street with the cost of a sheet of plywood as they don't, they're not going to know; I don't even know that, but I think that goes back to having the right team around you know **trust is a big deal**. Finding the right professionals is a big deal but honestly unrealistic expectations are also a big concern.

**Curtis:** What percentage of people come to you with a good budget where they have a realistic budget?

**Arc Three:** Maybe 1% yeah. Yeah,

**Curtis:** Yeah. Same here.

**Garrett:** I mean, it's common to, it's not uncommon for us to hear. I think I can do this for like $125 per foot, or something like that which is…

**Bryson:** A builder could not even do that at cost right now.

**All**: yeah, no.

**Garrett:** I know this is like, what does that include is include doors? Okay.

**Bryson:** So this is an open-air concept, no way.

**Garrett:** So, you know, if you're going to build a quality home it's going to be more expensive than you anticipate most likely. So not having a contingency in place is also another mistake, you know, thinking that they can just scrape by and just do it for the bare minimum. I mean, our experience is that the cost of a residential project goes up over time. Definitely, not down. Yeah, time.

**Bryson:** And when he means by that, he means over the entire life of the construction process, because as it's getting built, you see things, you know, you're going to the site and you're seeing things and you're like, oh, but I could just spend another five thousand dollars and I can get this, you know, it's a much nicer, whatever and ultimately, if they were to look back and they go, oh God, we just added a hundred into this project. Yeah, that's up.

**Curtis:** Do you see couples come into the process with very different ideas of what that is both budget-wise and design-wise?

**Garrett:** Yeah, it's, you know, it's an interesting dynamic to see couples that, you know, at play when they're, when they're starting to design a home. And what one person says, you know, you can get a feeling that maybe the husband is not on board, and what he says, she doesn't agree with and so we're just kind of sitting there like doing on the other being like sounds like you guys need to really go talk about this. We'll ask the kind of questions that we discussed earlier about lifestyle, right? Yeah, and she'll say, “you know I cook I cook every day” and he's like, “no, you don't”, you know. So, you know, those sorts of things are interesting personal dynamics that you can discover in the design process.

**Curtis:** We always joke about half of our job being a plain marriage counselor. There's I think they're on the same page. Like the survey that they fill out, right? It's like usually one person's feeling that survey. Absolutely, we tell people, hey, you should both go together, but what happens is most of the time, as one of them filling it out

**Garrett:** Actually, funny story. I feel like our most successful residential project thus far was a couple and older couple and she had a very strong design aesthetic and he, you know, did not as much. She kind of guided that whole project and we actually did not even meet him until the house is almost done. Well, it was the most successful one. So you know, husbands just listens to your wives, just let her design the house.

**Curtis:** Yeah, that's good advice. So it sounds like our couple here Brian and Heather. They probably should have never even gone into this process because they weren't prepared financially, mentally, or any of this kind of stuff. So, this is really the question that I'm asking everyone that's coming on the show.

*What kind of person should not go through this process?* Is there a certain type of person that you think “don't do this”?

**Bryson:** Someone who does not care about quality.

**Garrett:** Yeah. Someone who does not care about quality, craft, or design if you're not really interested in, you know, a well-designed house. Then don't try to pursue well.

**Bryson:** I would also say that someone who does not have patience because it takes a lot of patience to do something like this. I mean, it takes what? A year to two years to build a house from start to finish. I mean, that's hiring the architect, to finish – the day you walk into your house could be two years.

**Curtis:** It could be two or more on just construction, just a house, not a big house.

**Garrett:** Yeah, and so I mean you're going to be joined at the hip with these people that you surround yourself with whether it's architecture or builder for a long time.

So if you don't have that patience, don't do it. Also, if you feel like you are smarter than everybody else at the table, don't do it. I mean, you would hire somebody as a professional for the reason to lean on their expertise to take their advice. If you find it very hard to take advice, then do it.

**Curtis:** Yeah, we should start. A company that just matches people up - match people that don't care about quality with those builders, and people that do care about quality with good Builders.

**Bryson:** All you have to do is to go buy a house in the suburbs.

**Garrett:** Yeah. So you have to be. It does.

**Bryson:** I mean that's the biggest thing too is when people go out to the suburbs and they're like, well, I saw this house. They said it was only, you know, listed for like 200 bucks, or less than those like $175 bucks a foot is like, but they're building a huge Community buying in bulk and they are this terrible craft.

**Curtis:** Well, as the same floor plan and a thousand different times exactly

**Bryson:** Yeah, it's getting paid by the house

**Garrett:** and they are just putting him out day by day. I think I probably do it in my sleep too.

**Curtis:** Yeah. So that's a lot of that stuff is coming to them, as pre-cut and pre-made. They are buying the lumber, which is already cut to a certain dimension, so there's a lot of time savings on there as well.

**Garrett:** I mean a couple of years ago, was out at a very large, Suburban track home neighborhood and I just I've run around in the golf cart with some people when I just stopped. And I went to look at the detail and they were using this really really cheap sheathing and the joints on it, we're not taped. And so there were all kinds of flashing moisture control issues of getting into the house. But the people that are buying those homes, as a look at these countertops that I got are these are nice granite countertops and it's like yeah, it's a custom home. Meaning it's customizable, you can swap a finished tile here or there but it's there's nothing custom beyond that and the quality of craftsmanship is egregious and terrible.

**Curtis:** So there's a type of person that shouldn't go through this process on the flip side of that. *What's your dream client would? Like, what kind of person?*We should do this and what's the best? What's the best possible customer to have other than lots of money?

**Garrett:** We spent a lot of time thinking about that, it is a good realistic, budget is very important. I think somebody who is accustomed to working with design professionals, maybe they've done it before or they really follow good craft a good design online or Instagram or whatever, they may enjoy that sort of thing.

**Bryson:** they trust our expertise. That's a big one, you know, because if coming to us. We expect that they are coming to us for a reason, and so trust is a Big one.

**Garrett:** Design Freedom. The least successful projects are the ones where they try to prescribe every little Aesthetic thing about the home, to us. “I want this kind of whatever it is, you know, I want this style of façade”, you know. Yeah. But letting us do our jobs is key to the most successful projects.

**Bryson:** Yeah, I think that the projects that we do get that design, Freedom, most of our clients are pretty pleat. I mean, they're, they're basically like, oh wow. I didn't know that. That could be a possibility. It's like, yeah you didn't because you're used to seeing the dining room on the left. Office to the right. You come into you, you know, right? Like the typical Suburban layout.

**Garrett:** I mean if you're trying to work with somebody who does not come to the table with a preconceived idea of what their home is, that is an ideal client and if they have the budget.

**Curtis:** I agree. Do you all have any horror stories about projects gone horribly wrong? It could be something that you've been a part of or just something that you've seen. Anything like that that you would mind sharing with us?

**Arc Three:** Well, yeah. Aside from the things that we have at the roof about the roof and the things we've already talked about

**Bryson:** well and then I would say that we've had some bad experiences early on in the design process, like, you know, we've learned over time like we've added the survey, we've added different things because of bad experiences in the past

**Garrett:** it's all about filtering out the wrong clients. That's right

**Bryson:** We've had clients that come to us with pre-bought plans or plans that they’ve sketched…

**Garrett:**  we had one guy that Came into the office with a plan that he had drawn from a game - yes, Sims. Again. “This is kind of what I want.” I mean that to us today, would have been a major red flag and that project was a disaster for the kid from the ghetto.

**Bryson:** I don't know how many times we redesigned it because it was kept being prescribed and if it just drew it out

**Garrett:** Everything about it, there, the contractor was a personal friend and the relationship ended when the project ended there. I don't, I'm not sure if they are friends anymore. We were told that there, that's not a yeah.

**Bryson:** So, I mean, it just wasn't a good experience, you know? And we learned a ton from that experience.

**Garrett:** So, you know, so they also tore down. The existing home on the property. Yes, it kind of sounds like the episode, they? Yeah, it did. And there's something about the floodplain, right? The next buyer. What was that?

**Bryson:** Yeah, so that like, it was in the floodway and so the existing house was in the floodway, and we could utilize some of that square footage towards the new house, being in that property. If we didn't, we would head to build, you know, build up over it, and so square footage-wise, because the site was so big, there were certain parameters that we needed to keep the house on the lot in order to get some of that like the credit some of that credit, right?

**Garrett:** But they ended up with the boys and so now when they sell the property there is no Because the property is like property

**Bryson:** And it went through almost half the site, so, like, whoever's going to build on that site, either has to go really high or they're going to have to build way in the front in it. Like the proportions of the house would have been way off. Basically, the first floor would have been a super small footprint and so that goes back to also don't buying plans online and demo in your house before being told by a professional because.

**Curtis:** Right.

**Bryson:** Yeah, there are ramifications for that.

**Garrett:** We've also had you know disappointing projects where the client did not have funding secured before making major steps and we had, we had somebody who demolished the house, and they weren't able to get the funding because the market was so crazy. The construction Market was so crazy and expensive that the appraisers for the bank would not raise the have raised it because they were looking for comps in the neighborhood and there were no new construction budgets, right?

**Bryson:** Well, the latest comp was less than half of what it was going to cost to build. Ouch. Yeah, and less and that’s another big thing that we've learned that we tell clients early on is like, make sure you have the financing before you even come to us.

Yeah, that's another big key because they're like, oh I can easily get the financing. Where like you don't understand if your house does not appraise in the area that you're trying to build, you do not get that money from the bank, you are out-of-pocket…

**Curtis:** your out-of-pocket that amount

**Bryson:** If they give it an appraised of 300 because the comps in the area, but your house costs 600, you have to pull, 300 out of your own pocket to make up the difference right and you know

**Garrett:** That's common in older neighborhoods. Yeah, older neighborhoods are going to have lower comps and are going to have fewer new builds and that's something to be aware of.

**Bryson:** Another perfect client - Is an all-cash client. Oh yeah, they don't have to worry about financing.

**Garrett:** Financing is not an issue say anything about that issue.

**Curtis:** Yeah, for sure. So that, that overbuilding for the neighborhood thing is, it's definitely a factor even if you're paying cash, whatever. Right? But I mean how concerned should people be about over-building or under-buildings? We get that a lot. They're like, “well, I don't want to underbuild for the neighborhood.” I mean, there's, there's the financing component there, right? But there's also like, well, you know, is, is this your two-year home? You have to resell it as well. I have your home, is your 20-year home?

**Garrett:** Well, I would, that's one of my biggest pet peeves is clients coming in and we're having design discussions and they're talking a lot about resale value. If this going back to the kind of person who should not get into this if you are concerned about resale do not build a custom home. Yeah. Why would you spend all that time? Energy money? You're designing a house for the next buyer. Why don't you design it for yourself? You know, make a customizable. If you have a quality architect and contractor on board, good Craft and Good design will sell in any Market, you know? It will re-sell. You don't have to worry about that.

**Bryson:** Yeah because we're not designing crazy things.

**Garrett:** I mean if you're designing you know a spaceship on the property may be okay, but I mean most of the homes are not that way and if you're really concerned about resale, please, you know, don't waste an architect's time.

**Bryson:** Well, it really doesn’t waste your time or money, you want, you can buy, you know, there are design Builders out there that …

**Curtis:** Just go buy an off-the-shelf so to speak, right? You know, spec house, basically.

**Arc Three:** That's right, right, that's right. Yeah.

**Curtis:** So the spaceship on the property, you know, that could be a good thing because it could be like really unique, and then you're going to a magazine and up the one of my that what that's true. Actually yeah, that Darth Vader house.

**Garrett:** Man, very popular. Has it sold? I don't know, I think it sold. It was for sale. I was looking at the interior photos, I'm like, I don't know. Not for me, but maybe there's somebody out there. Yeah, I think it. All right.

**Curtis:** Well, I think that's all we've got today. Perfect, so Bryce and Garrett. I really appreciate you guys taking the time to come chat with us.

**Arc Three:** Thank you so much for the time.

**Curtis:** Yeah, as I said before, it's great to see you, young guys, doing something the right way. You guys are already doing something on a level, that these guys that are 10, or 20 years older than you are not achieving. So that's great to see. Thank you. And I enjoy working with you, so I appreciate it.

**Arc Three:** Yeah. Well, we're looking forward to building that first house with you Curtis. Yep, absolutely soon.

**Curtis:** Yeah. So asking if people want to work with you guys where should they go? How do we find you?

**Arc Three:** Yeah. Is up on our three [studio.com](http://studio.com/) or find us on Instagram. Facebook LinkedIn and you know it is stuff. Reach out to us by message. Thank you, Curtis,

**Curtis:** Thanks, guys. Awesome, Thank you again, and thanks to you our listeners and viewers for tuning into another episode of **The Your Project Shepherd Podcast**. Here, we teach that every successful project has four key components, and these are represented by a simple child's drawing of the house.

The foundation is planning. The left wall is your team, the right wall is communication, and the roof protects it and all is proper execution. Be sure to check back next week for another episode and another chapter of Brian and Heather’s story and hear our conversation with **Matt Sneller of Snellar Custom Homes.** Thanks and see you next time.