

# TOPICs



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## Orchestrating a Multi-disciplinary Design Yields the Best Solutions

“Success has many fathers.” This oft-quoted proverb rings especially true in land development, where a project’s success is the product of many contributors. Recent TOPICs on Pre-Design have illustrated how to build the proper foundation for the next critical step in land development – the Design phase. Effective design is fundamentally tied to the orchestration of many design disciplines.

Site design comes together in much the same way that an orchestra blends distinct sounds. Just as the conductor brings the music score to life by uniting the diverse talents of the wind, string, and percussion sections, a successful developer understands that each design professional on a project team plays a unique role. Some roles are more visible, some operate primarily in the background – but all contribute to a much better result than if played solo.

Comprehensive site design relies on a number of disciplines, including environmental scientists, landscape architects, site planners, civil engineers, traffic engineers, and surveyors. Eliminating or minimizing any of these disciplines can be detrimental to the design process. Even if all the key players are assembled on a team, they need to design in concert with each other. Otherwise, the civil engineer may design the most efficient method of grading the site based on the plan layout, while not fully realizing an opportunity to save a key wooded area. Similarly, a planner may design a layout without accounting for stormwater ponding, thereby producing unrealistic expectations for project density or open space.



Effective site design requires input from multiple design disciplines.

A site design based on extensive multi-disciplinary interaction comes out of the Design phase having been molded, tweaked, and massaged into something more efficient, more aesthetically pleasing, less costly, and easier to build. Just as careful Pre-Design helps lay the foundation for subsequent phases, a thorough design process allows the project to break ground faster. Multi-disciplinary design is much less apt to be stalled during the entitlement process with regulating agencies, and is less likely to have unforeseen issues that can cause expensive construction delays.

Multi-disciplinary design is value-added design. A comprehensive design approach minimizes potential impacts on a site’s natural resources, thereby providing for more environmentally sustainable use of the land. From the human perspective, a

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well-designed project welcomes, involves, and inspires belonging in the intended user. By capitalizing on the design team's experience, insight, and creativity, the project acquires a sense of place that helps it stand the test of time.

Shaping exterior spaces to create a successful project requires vision and care. Good designs are crafted by experts who have a keen understanding of natural systems, human interaction, and external influences and who work side-by-side rather than in sequence. Effective designs also need to reflect an understanding of construction methodology and other aspects of the Post-Design phase. By orchestrating multi-disciplinary design, your next project can resemble a musical symphony rather than a cacophony of sounds.



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