

Ten things to know before you do your LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE...

1. Master Plan, Master Plan, Master Plan.

I know, I know, I keep harping on this “Master Plan” stuff. But it’s important. With a Master Plan you are assured of wise use of your resources, no repeat tasks, once done-it’s done, and the ability to do work in stages without repetition of effort. It’s the only way to go!

2. Evaluate Cost.

Landscape Architecture is not inexpensive. The costs for infrastructure, structure, and the all-important finish details requires quite the investment. So, that being said, be sure your investment is supported by your budget and what the neighborhood can bear.

3. Plan for now, and in the future.

I run into this quite often. A young family wants a pool with all the trimmings. But the kids will eventually grow up and, hopefully, move out. So what do you with this all? Fill in the pool? Plank over it? Just to say, think about this and plan accordingly.

4. Evaluate site.

Make sure to evaluate the site and the location of underground utilities. Believe it or not there are some sites where the utility companies practically own your sub-grade. There is no way to build on such sites, except superficially. The moving of utilities and setting in place of new infrastructure is often the hardest part of extensive jobs. This is part of the Master Plan process.

5. Consider all seasons.

We live in Colorado. The usable season for outdoor areas is somewhat limited. For instance, uncovered decks are barely usable for much of the year, outdoor pools are good for 4-5 months, plant varieties are limited to what our hardiness zone will support, etc. The ideal Landscape Architecture project considers all seasons.

6. Consider Phasing.

Sometimes the budget will not allow for the owner to do all the work at once. This is when phasing the project works well. For instance, you may have a Master Plan that entails a pool, water feature, pavilion, gazebo, and lots of paving with planting beds, and a sprinkler system. Phase I could entail underground infrastructure and a couple of the big projects that require excavation. Phase II could add the above-ground structures and sprinkler system. Phase III could finish it out with the pavers, trees, and planting beds. Just an example. Phasing is what the Master Plan outlines in great detail.

7. Plan for mature growth.

A very common mistake in planning your Landscape Architecture is not planning on the mature size of this tree/shrub. You see this all the time. Someone plants a Blue Colorado Spruce within 10 feet of the house. The mature diameter of that spruce can exceed 30 feet! So, when we design the planting plan, we will take the mature size into consideration. When done, this may make the landscape look a bit sparse, but in the short run, those areas can be planted with annuals, perennials, and small shrubs until the large plants mature. Again, the Master Plan takes this into consideration.

8. Allow for maintenance.

The work of Landscape Architecture is substantial, but the long-term work is maintenance. So, it's important to think about such things as snow removal, mowing grass, sprinkler head repair, winterizing the systems, support to plants for high winds, etc. The maintenance schedule is part of the Master Plan.

9. Think Access.

How many times do you view your landscape as an entity unto itself? Yes, it is, in one sense, but it's also part of the whole property. So be aware of having access in the future. This means gates, pathways for equipment, and contractor's access in the event of heavy duty work down the road. Also a part of the Master Plan.

10. Have Fun!

After all this planning and work, be sure to have fun. Plan a 'staycation' to enjoy your new-found resort. Plan the whole area around fun activities. Don't let some of your favorite past-times become an after-thought. Things like horseshoes, sunbathing, playground elements, and just plain grass should be accounted for in the, you guessed it, the Master Plan.