

Box™

issue 2 - 2021

THE ARCHITECT BUILDER

A JOURNEY IN
DECISION MAKING

WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN
YOU'RE BUILDING NEW

TWO SIDES TO EVERY
HOUSE STORY



All house photos featured are homes designed and built by Box™ except pg.20, 35, 36

Photography: Sophie Heyworth, Tony Nyberg (cover), Kevin Bills, UpRealEstate, Andy Chui - drawphoto, Emma-Jane Hetherington



Welcome to our 2ND issue

Ladies and gentlemen, I want to talk about size. Economist Leopold Kohr famously said, "Wherever something is wrong, something is too big". He wasn't just talking about houses, but over-concentration in the form of centralised governments, business oligopolies, megacities and the use of natural resources outgrowing their limits. When we started Box™ everyone told us we had to create a business that could 'scale' and take over the world. The unlimited pursuit of growth is the ideology of the cancer cell and I'm satisfied to say that, after 10 years, we've evolved to a size that we feel is 'just right'. The outcome is a happy team, interesting projects and a focus on working for our customers rather than fretting about which territory to conquer next. This edition is a celebration of The Home during a tumultuous couple of years for us all, and justification that when you get the scale right - in business and your home - things just fall into place.

Dan.

Dan Heyworth -
Founder | Director



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The architect builder

Our aspirations as an architect builder are founded on the key principles of form, context and fitness, and providing the best design-and-build journey possible for our customers



<https://www.box.co.nz/box-the-architect-builder/>



“**T**he backbone of the process of production we envisage is a new kind of professional who takes responsibility for the functions which we now attribute to the architect, and also for the functions which we now attribute to the builder.”

He is responsible for the detailed designs of the houses, and for making sure that the actual design is in the hands of the family. The system of construction, which is the key to the possibility of his work, is under his control and is being continuously changed and improved by him. And he is responsible for the process of construction itself.

He is, in a nutshell, a modern equivalent of the traditional master builder.”

Christopher Alexander - *The Production of Houses* 1985

The hugely influential architect and design theorist Christopher Alexander, described the role of the architect-builder more than 30 years ago.

The word ‘architect’ derives from the Greek meaning ‘chief builder’. Today we see the split of design and construction becoming increasingly pronounced, with designers in many professions becoming more and more disassociated from the actual process of making.

How are designers able to design in the best interest of the homeowner with little or no experience of how materials go together, their performance or the craft of construction? Architects nowadays ask builders to build what they have designed, yet the builder shoulders the legal risk of structural and weathertightness liabilities for 10 years.

Conversely, contractors often don’t have a personal or vested interest in the project. They work from drawings produced by someone else, often with limited contact with the owner. Alienated from the design process, the risk is that they view the construction of the home like a product, with little emotional engagement or

understanding of what the owner is wanting to achieve.

Like Alexander, we believe the divergence of architect and builder roles, and the adversarial environment this creates, is damaging to the quality of buildings, the long-term cost of a home, and not in the best interests of the homeowner.

He argues, “The most fundamental reason for the architect-builder lies in the great complexity of buildings that must be produced in any human building process.”

At Box™, we understand this complexity and have worked over the years to create a process where design flair is balanced with building pragmatism and the owner’s wishes. Every member of the team is vested in the outcome of the house, working more intensely with families at each step of the process and working with other consultants and trades in a collaborative, not adversarial manner. There is only ever one person to point the finger at! It is also why, as per Alexander’s recommendations, we limit the number of projects that we can build in a year.

Unlike a lot of ‘design-build’ companies, neither the design nor the construction is sub-contracted. Nor are we restricted by a religious adherence to a specific construction method. If the site and brief warrant pile foundations on a slope, or split-level construction, then we will do what is in the best interests of the project, not the deals we have with our supply chain or constraints imposed by ‘head office’.

In terms of achieving Alexander’s vision of a truly iterative creative process during design and even build, this is still a work in progress – finance companies and owners will always prefer a ‘fixed price’ contract and don’t like changes during construction!

Our aspirations as an architect builder are founded on the key principles of form, context and fitness, and providing the best design-and-build journey possible for our customers. ■





All-day parking

Unless you were a local, you'd never know that behind the street façade of this home, is a leafy-and-lovely view of Grey Lynn park. Admittedly it looks a little different to its colonial-era neighbours

The site is long and skinny (think 40 metres x 11.7 metres wide), but also steep. That might seem tricky for building however Box™ design lead Tim Hogarth was excited. It presented him with the opportunity to play out an entry sequence, one where the house slowly reveals itself upon pushing open the front door.

The owner was passionate about the process of building, so came armed with a design vision and good energy. He had bought the property some 15 years ago as an investment and was finally in a position to remove the existing cottage (which was dilapidated and beyond re-use), making way for a place that felt more personalised. >

This new home nestles into the contours of the land; its sloping roof keeps it below the established recession planes so no resource consent or sign-off from neighbours was required. It's all very low key apart from one artful touch: when visitors approach, they are directed to the front door by a horizontal slash of red on a metal fascia board that contrasts the black vertical-timber cladding. "It's painted 'Pioneer Red' which relates historically to the colour and tone many homes in the neighbourhood used," says Tim.

On the entrance side of the building, the garage is made discreet by blending with the cladding. The front door opens to a passageway, with the careful placement of a window at the end of the space that frames a large magnolia tree. It is only once you turn a corner and enter the living room that a tableau of the city, the Auckland Sky Tower spiking up, emerges. "The more you enter, the more you discover," says Tim.



The building steps down three levels and each floor has a different aspect. The highest storey with its living/dining/kitchen space puts the park view fully in the frame. This level also has a generous east-facing balcony for breakfast in the dappled sun with a green and serene backdrop. Half a storey down, the bedroom zone is surrounded by vegetation and privacy. The main bedroom, on the lowest part of the plan, feels grounded and enjoys access to generous decking.

Clever planning has made the best of the site with interiors that are shaped around light and privacy. Above the kitchen, west-facing clerestory windows allow the evening sun to stream in, yet slot glazing in the bathrooms keeps those rooms light but secluded.



For more photos of this project visit the Box™ website:
<https://www.box.co.nz/project/all-day-parking/>



Interior aspects such as hand-blown glass pendants above the kitchen bench, an engineered white stone benchtop, and matt-white cabinetry with walnut timber give a contemporary flavour and personality. Bathrooms were specified with luxurious touches such as the same walnut cabinetry and floor-to-ceiling tiles to all walls.

“The client brought us lots of ideas – including the oak-timber railings around the stairwell. He was excited by the process and energised by the build,” says Tim. ■

Life is a deck chair

Investing in location is a proven strategy in real estate, but in this instance the owner followed her heart rather than her head



She set her sights high and kept to her budget and that has meant a future where the far horizon is very much part of the everyday picture.

Sometimes, when you buy a spectacular site, you're left with a modest budget for building. This client, in the film industry, fell in love with the views from this hilltop property in Piha that spanned the bush-meets-beach scene facing towards Lion Rock. And who could blame her?

In 2020, she set Box™ the challenge of crafting a two-bedroom, two-bathroom home on a tight budget (including water tanks).



Minimising wastage has underpinned our philosophy for a decade and so we once more relied on these principles for the economical design.

Minimal engineering was a good starting point; the house sits on short wooden piles to hover above the grassy section. Built to modular material sizes, the dwelling is only 81 square metres in total but contains a self-contained living/bedroom area for the owner separated from a sleeping pod by a partially covered central deck, so the property can operate as an Airbnb.

Instead of one long 'boring' rectangle that faced the view, we broke up the plan by stepping one pod a little forward of the other. While we stuck to a proven kitset of parts – timber-sheet cladding, floor-to-ceiling joinery, and plasterboard walls – there were moments of magic. The stainless bench in the kitchen adds an industrial quality that didn't hike the price too much and a plywood dining bench projects at a lower height from the island, saving space and looking rather stylish. The compact bathrooms are understated with cabinetry kept off the floor to ensure a feeling of spaciousness and lighting inserted into the built-in cabinets that keeps everything sleek. ■



If you fancy a weekend away, you can stay in this Box™ design-build <https://www.airbnb.com.au/rooms/4360511>



For more photos of this project, visit the Box™ website: <https://www.box.co.nz/project/piha-beach-life/>





Rewind & redefined

It's a familiar story: when youngsters enter the picture, the excitement of the big-city dream tends to pale. Childhood memories of beaches, open space and a more relaxed pace suddenly become irresistible

Expatriate Luisa Andrew and her Scottish husband Stephen Dewar were living with three young children in a Hong Kong terrace house when they answered the call of the Kiwi lifestyle. They decided to build on this Waiake section on Auckland's North Shore, which they had already owned for several years.

"It was a lovely piece of land close to the beach," says Luisa, who grew up in a house her dad built just two doors up. "We felt like it deserved a good building." Already sold on the Box™ aesthetic, the couple was convinced to sign up because of the seamless way the design-and-build process would be managed. While many meetings and decisions were made remotely in cyberspace, Stephen flew over from Hong Kong to touch base in person every now and then.

The brief, understandably, included a wish for "as much grassy space as possible." The old 70s home that occupied the land was moved off, with the new dwelling pushed closer to the road to make room for a north-facing lawn.

Box™ design manager Tony Borland-Lye and design lead Tim Hogarth set about crafting a home that was oriented for sun and fun on the gently sloping land. The only challenge was an overland flow path. "In a storm the collected rain flows across the site, so we had to maintain a minimum floor level above the natural ground. We also gently sloped the driveway to channel any water away from the house," says Tim. >



The 220-square-metre home was conceptualised as a floating cedar box over a metal box anchored to the ground. The building massing doesn't dominate the coastal suburban property, even though it enjoys a generous floorplan. "The top level is cantilevered and interconnected with the lower box, resulting in a less monolithic building volume," says Tim.

The ground floor, clad in interlocking zinc sheets, contains all the living zones. Upstairs the cedar box has three bedrooms and a master suite, with a balcony that overlooks a reserve path. A giant 6m-wide glass sliding door opens from the living/kitchen zone to a covered deck created by the floor above, with wide stairs leading down to a backyard where the grass is certainly greener. The ground floor also has a study – a home office that came in super handy during the latest lockdown – plus a flexi room with a built-in, pull-down bed. It was important the couple have somewhere for overseas family to stay. Box™ suggested this as a second living room that could be converted to a bedroom when needed. "If you heat-mapped the home, there wouldn't be any spaces that we don't regularly occupy," says Luisa.

In the everyday, once the kids walk home from school or return from the beach, the family tend to gather

in the kitchen. "It was Box's idea to have a scullery where we could put the jug and the toaster, which makes the main space tidier," says Luisa.

The bamboo plywood cabinetry material was a practical choice for the kitchen and bathrooms, as other materials could show up messy fingerprints. Warm yellow tiles to the kitchen splashback match the sunshine shade of the coloured front door and the coordinating yellow mailbox has become a talking point in the neighbourhood. "Everyone in our suburb identifies us as belonging to the house with the yellow door and mailbox," says Luisa.

Luisa's sister and her partner now occupy the old family home, as her mum and dad have moved to Matakana. Close connections are just a short stroll away and, once international visitors are allowed back into the country, Luisa and Stephen can't wait to share their piece of Kiwi paradise with far-flung family.

For now, Luisa is enjoying the familiarity and sense of homecoming. "It was only recently that I realised my parents' house has a metal mansard roof which folds down over the top floor, and a bottom level in cedar. We've just recreated that here – only the other way around." ■





For more photos, visit the Box™ website: <https://www.box.co.nz/project/rewind-and-redefined-2/>



Inventive configuration

Tucked onto a compact site in the Wellington hills, this home delivers big living within a built envelope that is not overbearing in its suburban setting

Two volumes are stacked in a + shape, a design methodology that reduces the visual scale of the dwelling and allows overhangs from the top floor to shelter and shade the living below.

Inventive configuration against a backdrop of tight planning controls makes full use of the 466-square-metre section. The family, a couple and three children, can spread out in the interconnected dining/living/kitchen/flexi rooms downstairs while upstairs are four bedrooms and a landing which is optimised with space for a desk.

The material palette is smart but simple: vertical cedar cladding stained grey to hasten the silvering, countered by black aluminium joinery. At ground level light floods in through floor-to-ceiling glazing while upstairs slot windows maintain privacy and frame slices of suburbia – a cottage-clad hillside or a neighbour’s cabbage tree.

The owners repurposed beautiful kauri floorboards from the ramshackle cottage that once occupied the site and Box™ sourced flooring to match. These matt-finished boards are a characterful addition within the new-build where a kitchen was designed to accommodate a retro Smeg refrigerator. Subway tiles and cabinetry in white and pale pine make it a Scandi-chic showstopper. What’s not on show is the scullery: timber jambs around the bi-fold doors to a tall cabinet give no clue as to the room behind.

In the living area, a built-in unit was custom-designed for a TV and the owners’ collection of books. A woodburner and low-E thermally broken joinery were included for when the windy city lives up to its name but, with vitex decking on three sides, there are also myriad options for a barbecue and craft brew when the Wellywood sun shines. ■



For more photos of this project visit the Box™ website:
<https://www.box.co.nz/project/inventive-configuration/>

Barn-like yet contemporary

When Ben and Ally embarked on their design-and-build journey with Box™, they were completely chilled about the process. “Their all-in-one package removes all the stress,” says Ben. What the couple didn’t anticipate was a last-minute surprise



To be fair, that wasn’t the fault of Box™. As Ally explains: “When we first started building, we only had three children, so the house was designed to accommodate that.” Then little Moses came along.

Nine years ago, the couple was fortunate to have secured a picturesque Onehunga site overlooking Manukau Harbour by buying it with Ally’s parents. “They wanted to help us into the Auckland housing market and the land came with two existing homes, so we went halves on it,” she explains.

The young family lived in a beautiful but draughty bungalow at the front of the site. When the quotes and plans to renovate came in, the steep cost was a shock. “One of the prospective builders asked if we had considered starting from scratch,” says Ally. They hadn’t. But when the same builder pointed them towards Box™, Ben and Ally saw the light...both figuratively and literally.

In the end, choosing to bowl and build was an easy decision. “We liked Box™ right from the start; the team was so personable when we met them and came to visit our site the very next day,” says Ally.

Their brief was for everything the old house was not. That included a large, open-plan living space so they could keep an eye on the children – and to make the most of the south-facing view. Mostly though they asked Box™ to work their



“Box™ put some high windows into the sloped ceiling on the east side so now we get lots of natural light in morning. It may seem like a small thing to others, but except in the middle of winter, we love not having to put the lights on until it gets properly dark,” says Ben.

magic on the long, narrow section to capture as much light and sun as possible.

Apart from that, the couple was laid-back about their requirements. “We were happy to tap into their expertise,” says Ben. “We didn’t have our minds set. We trusted what Box™ proposed.”

That included the cladding. While Ally and Ben had a vague idea they wanted cedar, they were gently steered towards Abodo instead, a thermally modified timber with a similar aesthetic that is more durable and cost effective.

This cedar-stained pine, teamed with dark-toned Weathertex, gives the 155-square-metre dwelling a two-toned appearance; its strong single gable is barn-like yet contemporary, a look which neatly straddles the rural/suburban divide. Generous decking on the north side runs seamlessly out from the living room to enhance a feeling of spaciousness delivered by cathedral ceilings, and deep eaves provide protection from the elements.

The interiors programme is over three levels with two bedrooms of equal size located off the main living area which has a break-out TV room for keeping youngsters occupied on rainy days. A half-storey down is the master suite, main bathroom (including a full wet room) and a fourth bedroom. A garage and storage area with internal

access hunkers into the slope beneath the living zone.

The Greens moved in on Valentine’s Day 2020 – “It was very romantic unpacking all those boxes,” quips Ben – and then, along came, lockdown. “Let’s just say, we spent a lot of time at home during that first year. We really wore it in,” says Ben.

From morning to night, the house delivers easy living for the couple and the children who range in age from 10 years to 10 months. From the breakfast-bar line-up at the start of the day, to after-school play time, the bi-fold doors flung right open, the sun streaming in, it’s all good. “Box™ put some high windows into the sloped ceiling on the east side so now we get lots of natural light in morning. It may seem like a small thing to others, but except in the middle of winter, we love not having to put the lights on until it gets properly dark,” says Ben.

Ally, who is so pleased the new kitchen is a social hub for family and friends, also enjoys the rare moments of ‘me’ time. When Ben is at work, and Moses is taking his afternoon nap, she hops into the hanging chair they have suspended from a specially reinforced ceiling. With a cup of tea in hand and a view through floor-to ceiling windows all the way across the reserve to Māngere Mountain, she drinks in the rare moment of serenity. ■

For more photos, visit the Box™ website: <https://www.box.co.nz/project/urban-living/>



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Storing the printed word

Fill your house with stacks of books, in all the crannies and all the nooks, beseeched Dr Seuss. Here are some rather more stylish ways to store the printed word



IT'S A WRAP

Books and media go together like birds of a feather and so shelving in a TV den is a great match. Not only is this a practical approach but it has the benefit of making the space feel cosy and characterful instantly. Measure the items you know you'd like to store so the dimensions can be built to suit; if you're a vinyl fan, you'll want that collection on show not in a box on the floor! Shelving can wrap around a wall to create a natural nook. A comfy couch or reading chair opposite is all that's needed to complete the picture. It also makes sense to locate this type of floor-to-ceiling shelving in an area of the house where privacy is required from neighbours. Perhaps the south side of the house where fewer windows make the rooms easier to heat.

WORK THE ROOM

If you run a client-facing business from home, why not

incorporate some multi-task shelving into your new build. One Box™ homeowner operates a salon, so we designed a flexi room which is useful for seeing clients during the day and transforms into a TV room at night. Wall-to-wall shelving offers display space for books on one side and a product selection on the other. Trimmed in plywood timber, the shelving looks smart yet welcoming. It makes for a professional yet personal atmosphere that clients love. Also, don't forget to put in some behind-door storage for extra stock and a space to tidy away items the kids may have left on the floor – because no-one can be 100% organised, 100% of the time!

SAME SAME BUT DIFFERENT

If you wish to add some rhythm and symmetry to a room, go for cubicle-style shelving where each cubby hole is the equal of the next...and the next. Such simplicity makes a highly contemporary statement. Run it the length of ▶



the wall or position either side of a fireplace, TV or desk. Arrange some books vertically and others horizontally, and, if you really want to channel your inner Martha Stewart, make sure you colour co-ordinate the spines. Add collectible objects (whatever you like to frame in the cubby, from a vase to a hat to a treasured teapot) and you'll nail a look that's modern yet personalised.

MORE THAN A FEELING

Of course, these days a bookcase is never just a bookcase. It usually performs several roles and is customised to wrap around the television set or a painting, a drinks' cabinet, fireplace or a built-in desk. The bookcase can also be a useful room divider. It can be half-height in an open-plan space to provide separation but visual connection or full height but backless which does the same job. In one Box™ project, a slender insertion behind the kitchen was

wrapped in meranti ply. This alcove contained nothing more than a bookshelf and a built-in day bed, a wonderful escape from the everyday in a home that was too small to contain its own library.

A LITTLE OF WHAT YOU FANCY

If you imagine you need to devote an entire wall to a built-in bookshelf, your imagination is limiting. Although that approach does, in our opinion, look fantastic and rather scholarly, bookshelves can be added anywhere, in any room. At Box™, we love to include them as part of the kitchen (integral to the cabinetry or built into the front of the island bench) or slivered in between cupboards in a living area or beneath a window seat. Why not have them in a bedroom flanked by the wardrobes or even devote a little shelf or two to books in the bathroom vanity? Because reaching for a book makes life a lot more colourful. ■



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THE LOWDOWN ON CONSTRUCTION DRAWDOWNS

Building a home is an exciting challenge, and financing it doesn't have to be daunting. Together with Kiwibank, we've compiled this no-jargon beginner's guide to construction loans

For many people, building their own home is at the top of their wish-list. They dream of a place that will express their style and embrace their lifestyle. Being involved with the design and build from the get-go is exhilarating – a project that brings a real sense of satisfaction and reward. While financing a build is a little different to applying for a mortgage on an existing property, it's not the overwhelming process you might think. Just as a design-and-build home is shaped individually for you, so is a construction loan that can be adapted to your specific financial situation. With the bank alongside you on the journey, you'll have a roadmap to the finish line and any challenges can be tackled together. So let the adventure begin.

BEFORE YOU BUILD

Over the past 12 months, 7% of Kiwibank's new home loan customers have opted to build. While some of these construction-loan customers are first-home buyers, the majority already own their home, so they'll need to work out how to manage an existing home loan alongside the new construction loan. A construction loan is drawn down in stages; the loan balance increases as the build evolves. This makes sense for two reasons: "Since the lending is drawn as it is needed, it saves the borrower interest," says Richard McLay, Home Loans Product Manager at Kiwibank. "Plus, it's a good way for the bank to know that the build is on track." When you go through the lending-approval process, the bank will evaluate the

viability of the project. For starters, they need assurance that the building company their prospective customer is dealing with is a certified builder. "At Kiwibank, we assess the contracts to see what is included in the build," says Richard. "We want to make sure that whoever is going to construct the home does so in a cost-efficient manner." To give you the big tick on funding, the bank will need quotes from the multiple parties involved. Of course, because Box™ is a one-stop design-and-build shop, it's so much easier to organise. Once the numbers are all in place, the bank will build in a contingency fund of between 5% and 10% to allow for any unforeseen additional costs. To keep cashflow rolling, it's a good idea to ensure you have the right structure for your loans. While you're waiting to move into your new home, one option is to put the construction loan on interest only. "We understand that our customers already have living costs, so while the building is being constructed, this lessens the strain on finances," says Richard.

DURING THE BUILD

Once your build is underway, the construction loan is drawn incrementally from invoices that match the contract; this is known as schedular payments. The customer receives the invoice from their building provider and gives it to the bank for payment. These are made by the bank to the construction company when certain milestones are met. The milestones will be pre-agreed, and each payment is authorised by the customer.



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A TYPICAL MILESTONE SCHEDULE MIGHT LOOK LIKE THIS:

- **Deposit on signing contract** (to cover consent fees and preliminaries such as site set-up, temporary power and water, deposits on materials and subcontracts, insurances, and project planning)
- **Slab down** (foundations laid or piles in place)
- **Frame stage** (external framing and roof trusses)
- **Lock up** (external walls and joinery installed)
- **Fit out** (pre-plumbing, pre-wiring, ceilings)
- **Completion** (kitchen, bathrooms, appliances, flooring installed)

A PAUSE IN OPERATIONS

So far so very orderly, but what happens if there's a glitch in the plan? The biggest risk with a construction loan is the time it can take for the build to be completed. The gap between when you sign up to build and how long it takes to construct the home can be 12 months or more. As we all know, a lot can change in a year, and sometimes there are unavoidable delays. "In 2020, the pandemic shut down building sites and the supply chain for building materials was affected," says Richard.

At other times, human nature might be the cause of the pause. As your home build progresses, you may want to make a change to the design specifications, for example extending the deck or changing the dimensions or style of the kitchen bench. Even small changes, like putting in additional power points, will impact the cost, so be sure to keep the bank in the loop. "When that happens, customers need to

acquire a variation to the agreement with the builder and get new funding approval for any additional costs," says Richard. The bank will work through these variations on a case-by-case basis. It may mean a change to the milestone payment schedule and some changes could impact the existing building consent, which means more waiting while the council reassesses the new plans.

HOME RUN

When the project passes the finish line, and you've advised the bank in writing that the house is completed to your satisfaction, the bank will pay the final invoice. They'll ask for a copy of your house insurance policy and a practical completion certificate (at Box™, this is standard as part of the Registered Master Builders' contract and signed off by the customer and the design lead).

When chatting to the bank about paying your builder's final invoice, it's a good time to discuss your final loan structure, to ensure it's suited to your financial goals.

Our top tip is to talk to your bank early to get an idea of how much you can afford. Ensure you also have a clear plan on what you're looking to achieve, so that there are minimal variations during the build. That way you'll be well on your way to a project delivered on time and on budget.

To review your specific situation and financial requirements, please talk to a Kiwibank representative or your financial adviser.



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A trick of the light

Lighting might not take top billing when it comes to the wishlist that will make a space your own, but it is one of the most magical aspects of design – your chance to effect a Tinker Bell moment using the fairy dust of light

When designing for light, some only focus on the practical side – will there be enough of it over the kitchen bench to dice an onion without chopping off your finger, for instance. But there are two sides to this coin: playing with light is also playing with shadow and, as Japanese author and aesthete Jun'ichiro Tanizaki says, “Were it not for shadows, there would be no beauty.”

Specialist designers understand how to manipulate the subtleties of light, but here's a little taster of what it can do:

- Enchanted evenings begin with the right type of light. Sure, cool tones are appropriate for garages and workshops, in areas where task lighting is needed to discern the actual colour of objects or for security lights that make a would-be burglar blink and think twice. But in the entrance to a home, a golden light (about 3000K on the Kelvin scale) will be far more inviting. A wash of light up the walls on approach to an entrance and across the ceiling of the front porch outlines the home as a beacon ‘in’ the dark and gives visitors a warm welcome.
- Negative detail is a lighting designer’s best friend; it allows LED strip lights to be threaded into architectural features with the result that the lighting is not only hidden

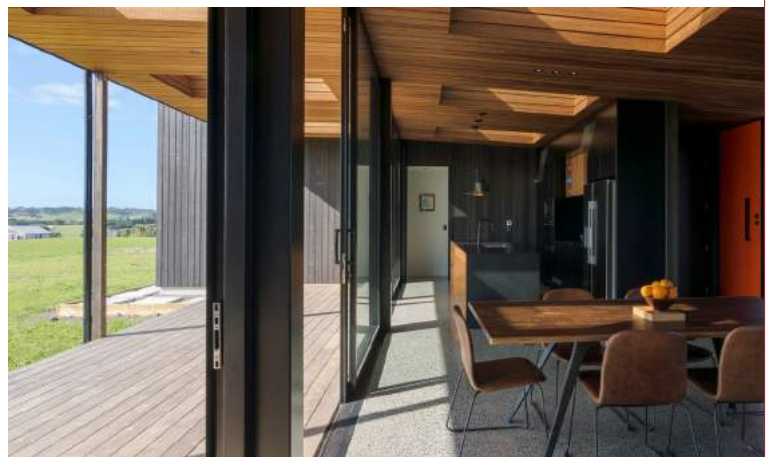
but the object is highlighted, often appearing to float in the space. There are many applications where this makes a beautiful addition to a room: lighting can be slotted into the juncture where a wall meets the ceiling so the two seem disconnected, between the grooves of a plywood panel ceiling, under a stair banister, the lip of a kitchen benchtop or beneath bathroom cabinetry so the room is softly illuminated from below.

- Unless you’re a supermodel, or under 30 years of age, you won’t want lighting in the bathroom vanity to fall from directly above. Overhead lighting creates scary shadows on the face which, first thing in the morning, can be a shock to the system. Best steer clear of cool light here too – it drains any colour from your complexion which may mean you overcompensate on the liquid foundation. Natural light is optimum but, failing that, use a bulb in a colour temperature that mimics this. For even illumination, a pair of side lights either side of the mirror enhance the artistry of a morning and evening routine; these can even be custom designed into the vanity unit.
- Aah the family pool – a place for a mid-summer plunge, a magnet for entertaining, an addition that ▶



keeps younger children amused for hours and the teenagers home longer. But at night, without the right lighting, that sparkling, hard-working design feature becomes nothing more than a black hole in the backyard. For glow-in-the-dark good times, get the experts' advice on lighting that can be concealed beneath the water level and will wash beautifully down the walls. Use in-ground lights around the pool area for safety and spotlights directed onto trees and foliage to transform the suburban space into a tropical paradise.

- If you've invested in a tile that's a talking point for your kitchen splashback, dial up the design conversation by using strip LEDs under high cabinets to wash down onto it – an asset in setting the mood for dining and entertaining. Task lights above the island make life easier and although three pendants are still popular, slimline linear pendants, that can be customised to length, are the obsession of the day: you'll need a high-wattage for food preparation but make sure it's on a dimmer for the dinner-party.
- When working with your lighting designer, always mention items that you think deserve to be highlighted as the main event. Spatial design benefits from a focal point and lighting can create this by using a narrow beam to draw attention (similar to the way a roaring fire has such natural magnetism). You might pick out a painting on the wall, highlight the coffee table in the centre of a room, or zone in on a piece of sculpture off to the side. Whatever you choose, that's okay – it's personal – but be singular in your selection. Too many 'heroes' dilute the experience. ■



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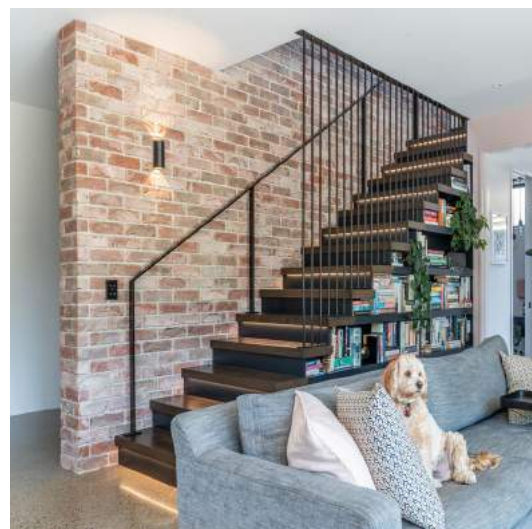
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A journey in decision making

The design decisions we make when building a home aren't always based on fashion or finance. Sometimes they hark back to our childhood



That's what first-time builders Terri and Sam discovered when, along with the Box™ team, they started the process of conceptualising a new-build in Auckland's Glendowie. "I grew up in red-brick houses and our first home together was a red brick ex-state house, so perhaps a feeling for red brick seeped into our subconscious," says Terri.

Choosing that as one of the cladding materials was a significant step forward, but it wasn't necessarily straightforward. Sam had taken to Pinterest for inspiration but most of the dwellings he pinned were Australian. The stock here was different. Eventually the pair found just the right brick at The Brickery. San Selmo's 'Aged Red' looks tumbled, hand-poured, rustic and reclaimed. It looks like the past.

That wasn't the only glimpse backwards that propelled this project into the future. Although there was certainly plenty of opportunity on the generous section that backs onto a tennis club and a park, the couple did not want to occupy the land with too much house. They have three children so the idea of a spacious back lawn with enough room to swing a bat took precedence. "Growing up, I had a flying fox in the garden," says Terri. "We wanted the feeling of wide-open sky and the trees from the park in the background."

Greenery is hugely important to this one-time lawyer turned design agency account manager turned project manager. She's a self-confessed plantaholic, with 25 plants (she's counted) waiting to nature-up the scheme. But that's not all. A long, low window in the dining room receives a sliver of hedge when seated at the table, and a custom-designed pendant light above the kitchen bench comes complete with hygroscopic moss. "The beauty is you never have to water it and when you walk into the house, you'll see the green immediately."

It's obvious that Terri is a left-brain, right-brain personality who not only thinks about detail and practicality, but also has an aesthetic appreciation. These two sides drove her decision making. For instance, while the couple were initially keen on using black steel in combination with the red brick, that idea evolved. "As cool as it looks, steel is not terribly environmentally friendly, and it attracts the heat," says Terri. Instead, they've used vertical Abodo timber weatherboards treated with a natural wood coating called Sioox, which seals

and cures the wood to weather uniformly to a silvery grey. The timber, which is used at the entrance and encases the upper bedroom level of the home, not only softens the brick but will only need one more coat of the protective product before Terri and Sam can relax on that maintenance front for 10-15 years!

So, pragmatism ruled in the choice of cladding, concrete floors (thermal mass) and carpets which are wool (for sustainability) in a forgiving speckled grey (cue three busy children and a dog). They also used New Zealand-made, wool-based insulation and there's a fireplace with a wetback for water heating and the option to link it to solar panels in future.

Unusually, the couple opted for a carport instead of a garage, which saved money on the build, but they compensated with well-thought-out storage within the home – a generous laundry and high cupboards tucked up under the soaring gable in the children's rooms for those once-a-year items such as ski gear.

But, where they felt it justified, they pushed rationalism aside and went all out. When Box™ argued for a 2.4-metre stud height downstairs to take advantage of the modular size of materials (for example structural timber and plasterboard sheets), they pushed back. "We went for 2.7 metres as we didn't want to feel like the ceiling was weighing down on us." Upstairs, where the volume is provided by raked ceilings tucked beneath the gable, they agreed to the 2.4 metre stud.

With the build process well on its way, Terri was kept busy choosing colours to personalise her family's forever home. There's a dark blue for the TV den, an even moodier blue for the en suite bathroom and an industrial concrete-grey for the children's rooms. Destined for completion before Christmas 2021, the home was in its final stages as we went to press. Although Terri's mind is ever on the job and she's really enjoyed keeping track of the details, there is one thing that surprised her.

When Box™ visited the site and flew their drone into the sky above to survey the surrounds, the pictures showed a peek of the sea. Now that the main bedroom is built, the wraparound corner windows offer a vista across suburbia with a big, wide tide clearly visible in the near distance. "The steel eyebrows on the windows really draw the eye out to the water," says Terri. A surprise yes. But a good one. ■



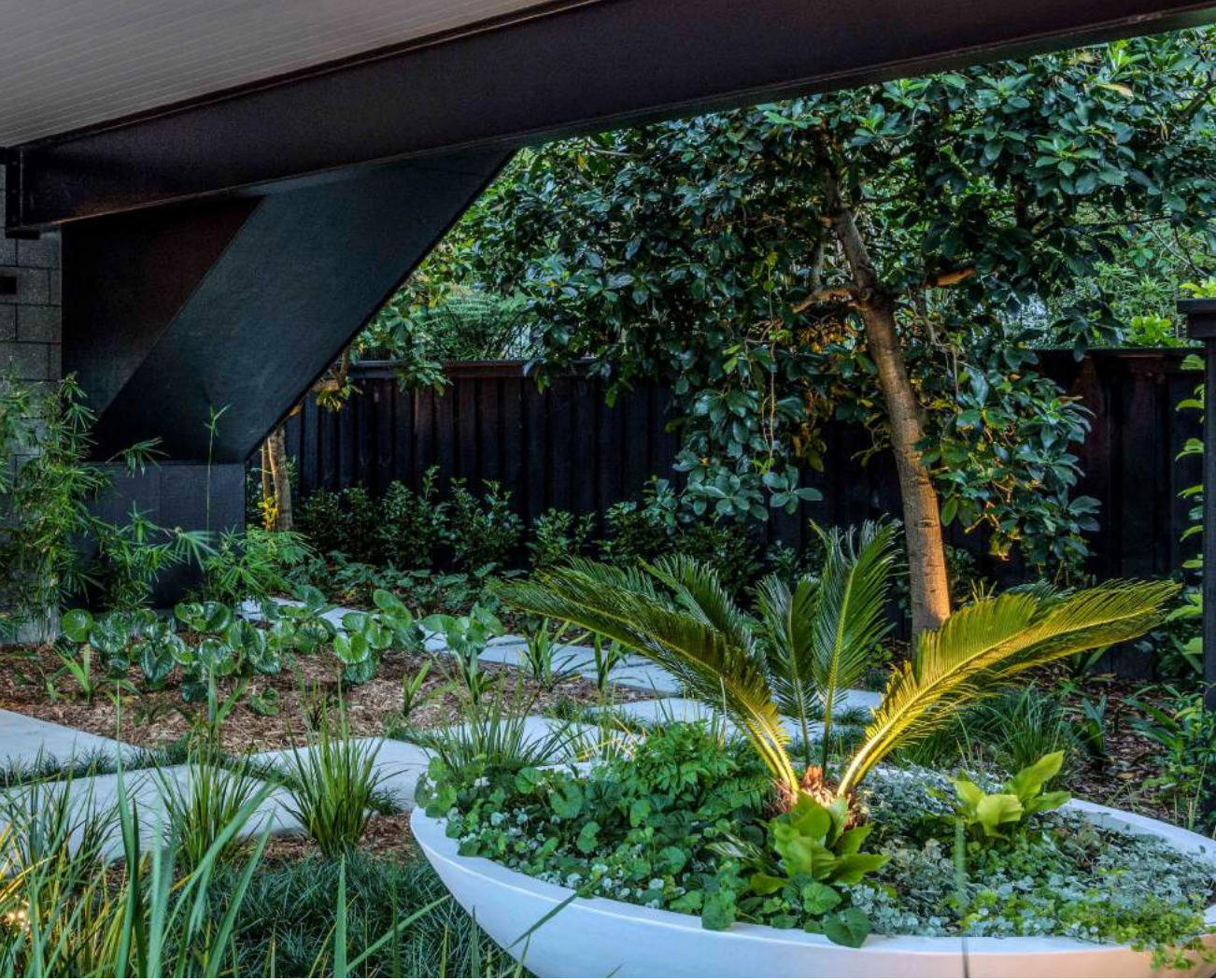
We bid you welcome

Entrances that entrance and entice don't just happen by happy accident. There are some design tricks that will make the most of your home's first opportunity to impress



COLOUR IT CONFIDENT

Weatherboards and other cladding materials tend to be either dark or light, so it's almost obligatory in our minds, that you make some noise with the front door. That's what the California modernists advocated – and we'd agree. A bold red, a sunshine yellow or a retro orange are the colours favoured by Box™ clients, but don't be afraid to choose a shade that is personal to you. We often find that the colour choice of the door becomes the cue for artwork in the entrance hall – or it could be the other way around. Also, don't miss the opportunity to finish the door with a strong, sculptural handle that is not just easier to pull shut, but a contemporary statement. Even small touches, such as a letterbox that matches the shade of the front door, can make a big difference to that first impression.



AMP UP OR SLOW DOWN

An entrance can either frame a view – to focus the eye – or it can shield it, so that the stop-you-in-your-tracks moment, when all is revealed, is delayed. In one home on the Tara iti peninsula, the carport, punched out beneath the body of the house, becomes a 3D frame that concentrates the view of bush and sea, making it look like a painting. Another Northland home is positioned

on the sloping site so that it completely obstructs the vista across the ocean to the horizon from the drive. The pathway to the front door leads down an exterior stairwell, flanked by timber battens, and an enticing glimpse of the sea through glass sliders draws you ever forward. ▶



<https://www.box.co.nz/we-bid-you-welcome/>



LEAD THE WAY

Believe it or not, some entrance designs don't help in wayfinding which means that first-time visitors struggle to locate the front door. That's okay if you wish to deter any unwelcome door-to-door salespeople, but it's not so great for friends and family. You could put a traditional pathway from the gate or highlight the entrance by including a porch – or you could do something different. In one Grey Lynn home, the low-key form nestles into the contours of the land, and the black-stained cladding helps to disguise the garage. It's all rather monolithic apart from one artful touch: a horizontal slash of red on a metal fascia board that contrasts the black timber to indicate where the door is. And it's painted 'Pioneer Red' – a colour that relates historically to the colonial red oxide used on villas of the period, of which there are many in this area.

A DRIVING FACTOR

Speaking of garages, where possible Box™ likes to keep them away from the front of the home. No one ever waxed lyrical about the beauty of a garage door – ever – so, if there's the opportunity, we'll plan the footprint to move the vehicle entry off to the side, rather than ruin the first impression and the street appeal. If this isn't possible, keeping the cladding on the main building and the internal garage the same goes a long way to making that unlovely feature simply disappear.

PLANT THE SEED

Landscaping plays a starring role in any entrance. There are many ideas to explore: bridges and ponds, planters and water features. In one Box™ project in the Auckland suburb of Westmere, a stormwater drain sat right in the middle of the natural building platform. Box™ slung the main body of the house between two plinths and then designed an entrance courtyard beneath this with tropical plantings to hide the drain. Concrete pavers and a set of steps trimmed with LED lighting make the entrance to this home a journey to remember both day and night. ■





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Looks good does good

We asked four Box™ team members to highlight some memorable style-setting and pragmatic design details of homes they've worked on

ENGINEERED FOR ELEGANCE

At one stage Ron Kumar thought of becoming a mechanic, but a stint underneath the bonnet in an oily workshop swiftly sent him off to his other passion: architecture and the built environment. Ron says he loves his career as an architectural technician, facilitating a design vision to reality through documentation.

An elegant solution to a practical challenge is one of his highlights of his three years at Box™. In the hinterland hills of Pataua North is a home with an incredible elevated aspect over the surrounding landscape. Although the site appears untrammelled, a strict building platform determined the extent of the new building location, which meant the team couldn't initially extend the foundations of the house and deck to take full advantage of the view.

The solution was to cantilever the ends of the building out from the permitted build area, resulting in a house that appears to float over the ridge.

SECRETS AND SURPRISES

Ensuring a building is weathertight is an important part of the role for architectural technician Conor O'Brien, who has been draughting up Box™ homes on the computer for three years now. As a child, Conor loved art and was good at maths. His dad was a builder, so which route to take? Studying architectural technology proved the best of both worlds. "It suited who I am" he says.

One of his favourite aesthetic features is the screening details that Box™ often includes – both inside and out – particularly those that channel a view. Conor loves a Waipu holiday home, completed a couple of years ago, for this very reason. Sweep into the driveway from the road and the house settles subtly onto its site. Cedar screening flanks the entrance beneath a portico and a stairway corridor, descending the hillside to the glass slider that is the front door. The screening directs the eye straight down the axis of the home, beyond the entry and on past the living room to focus on the spectacular coastline. ▶



Top: More information about the project in Pataua North, head to the Box website - <https://www.box.co.nz/project/floating-in-an-ocean-of-green/>
Below: More information about the project in Waipu - <https://www.box.co.nz/project/the-perfect-retreat/>



Top 2: More information about the projects - <https://www.box.co.nz/project/all-day-parking/> and <https://www.box.co.nz/project/seamlessly-integrated-with-the-landscape/>

OEUVRE AND ABOVE

Design lead Tim Hogarth is a modernist to his core. “I’m a rationalist; I like the celebration of the honesty in materials, and I believe mid-century design is an architectural period that will continue to be relevant for many decades to come.”

Tim says that, over the years, Box™ has developed its own signature design vernacular. Although individualised, the homes have a certain aesthetic; rather than being random and disparate, they read together as a body of work. Repeating the use of certain materials and design solutions is why Tim likes the 400mm slot windows that Box™ uses regularly as part of the architectural language. The narrow windows are typically designed vertically and carefully placed, and are implemented on elevations where privacy is compromised or views are not prioritised.

Another trademark that Tim picks out for its architectural appeal is vertical cladding, either in grooved boards or weatherboard. “Horizontal cladding can appear conservative in the wrong application,” he says. “Vertical is really sleek and looks 21st-century.” The metal fascia above the entrance that Box™ has recently started to employ is another design feature he believes will become a signature. Painted a contrasting colour to the cladding, it makes an eye-catching difference to the façade.

DELIGHT IN THE DETAIL

As a design lead at Box™, Nicola Liew routinely visits sites every 2 to 4 weeks during the build process – and counts it as one of the most satisfying parts of her job. “I enjoy seeing the excitement through the client’s eyes, as their home is realised.” She finds the responsibility of delivering homes rewarding, “I love the collaboration and the result of the end architectural product.”

Removing form from function is near impossible for a designer, so when choosing an aesthetic and practical feature there is a natural crossover. Nicola loves the detail that went into the exposed trusses on a Baddeley’s Beach holiday home that was handed over to client’s earlier this year. The project was a modernist take on a traditional farmhouse barn and the trusses were reimagined as a contemporary build element, referencing both architectural periods. “The large volume the trusses give the living spaces has expanded the traditional Box™ aesthetic, which is exciting.” The challenge for the builders and electricians was to hide the fixing and wires between the beams that were sandwiched together. ■

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Shelter in place

The Langleys love the easy living that the modernist-led architecture brings to their new home with floor-to-ceiling windows that allow the views to flood in

Robyn and Leighton Langley felt conflicting emotions as they stood road-side on a wet and somewhat blustery day and watched a gigantic mechanical arm lift their bedroom pod up and over a specimen pōhutukawa to its place on their section. On the one hand they felt very excited; on the other, it was the most nerve-wracking experience of their lives. “It was an absolute monster of a crane,” explains Robyn. “And because our site is high above the road, the arm had to extend way, way out.”

The couple had owned a little old bach on this land overlooking Onetangi Beach on Waiheke for 26 years. When they decided to retire and live here permanently, Robyn put her foot down. “I told Leighton, ‘I need a house.’” The bach was sold and relocated as a minor dwelling and the Langleys, who had admired a Box™ house elsewhere on the island, approached the company cautiously. “We knew the spaces that we wanted but at the same time hoped they would challenge our thinking and surprise us with some ‘wow’ moments,” says Robyn.

Co-founder of Box™, Dan Heyworth, was delighted to oblige. “We love clients who have done their research and have minds of their own. The exchange of ideas is inspiring and tends to lead to better outcomes.”

When Dan suggested the home be assembled in modules in a factory and then transported over to the island and craned into place, the Langleys weren’t fazed. A neighbour had built this way so they knew what was possible. To keep costs under control, Box™ conceptualised seven small pods that could come over on regular ferries and travel along the road on normal-sized trucks.

Being mindful of the protected pōhutukawa and other vegetation, the on-site construction team slotted the pieces together and hooked up the services. “With a regular build, the site often ends up a mess but by craning in the volumes of the dwelling, we kept much of the land pristine,” explains Dan. On the eastern flank of the north-facing section, the kitchen/living/dining area is on the ground floor and the upstairs master suite sits above the double garage. “We get all the morning sun,” says Robyn. To the west, a studio wing is separated from the main part of the home by a deck. It has two bedrooms, its own lounge and a bathroom for when family come to stay – or it can be used as a holiday rental for extra income.

The volumes are long and narrow and follow the line of the hillside, slotting in demurely amidst the surrounding bush.



They are clad differently – in horizontal rusticated cedar and vertically grooved ply – which breaks up the mass of the home and gives it more visual interest. “People often ask us whether there are two or three separate buildings here,” says Robyn.

Working closely with the Box™ design team, she was eager to put her own stamp on the spaces. While Box™ suggested the dark/light combination of painted Strandboard and gaboony-ply cabinetry in the kitchen that the couple went with, Robyn added her own touches for a look she describes as ‘soft industrial’. There’s a metallic theme that flows through the home, and that starts at the front door.

“I didn’t want the coloured front door that is a Box™ trademark,” she says. Instead, she painted it herself in a product that mimics weathered steel. This design trope is picked up in a commercial-sized stainless-steel oven, in coppery pendants above the island bench and in rusted and concrete-look wall tiles in the bathrooms. “I also sourced the timber flooring, a European smoked oak with nice wide planks that we oiled for a matte finish.”

The couple took up full-time residence here in March 2020, just before the lockdown, and are relishing their good fortune. Filled with light and personality, their new abode is so easy to live in. Home is a collection of memories – those already made and those yet to come. Each day, Leighton rises, sips his coffee on the deck as he looks out to the horizon and ponders the flag he will choose to hoist on the pole fashioned from an old yacht mast that once belonged to Robyn’s father.

“We only have flags of the countries we have been to,” explains Robyn. So far that’s 50 plus and counting. They are looking forward to their next adventure although, with such a special slice of the world to inhabit in the meantime, there’s no hurry to venture very far. ■



The studio, Wave Song, is available for holiday rentals here:
www.waihekeescapes.co.nz/property/663160/wave-song-onetangi/



What to expect when you're building new



If you've never built before, it can be a daunting commitment. If you want the experience to be a positive one, here are some questions to ask upfront before you choose to enter the design-and-build relationship

1. At a high level, how does your overall process – from commencement to completion of work – operate? What is required of the client at each stage?

The best thing to do if you're thinking of building with Box™ is to get in touch as we offer a mini workshop to prospective clients. It's free and it walks you through the process from site constraints to forming a brief. We also model the likely total project cost using historic data as our baseline. We will identify the key milestones and you'll get an understanding as to whether we are a good fit for your project.

2. How do you go through the initial requirements and design process?

By using a combination of desktop research, site visits and, of course, meeting the client. Every site, brief and budget is unique. And so are people! These need to be aligned to our values and proposition. It's the only way for a prospective client to work out if we're able to offer what you are hoping to get.

3. What are the key drivers of cost and the easiest way to keep costs down?

The biggest variable is siteworks: from the access to setting down the slab (or building on poles). This is something we get a grip on early in the process as it is the biggest area of risk. We look at the earthworks required, what the driveway will be and the general infrastructure. To keep costs down, clients need to have a flexible approach and be open to different ways of achieving a goal. Not being too rigid and holding on to too many preconceived ideas can save on costs. For example, it can be a lot more expensive to integrate a double garage [involving costly siteworks] – so be open to a design that detaches the garage from the house. Be open to us challenging you on the size you require the house to be as well. A lot of people think they need more floorspace based on the home they currently live in, but our argument is that a well-designed house with good light, proportion and space may seem just as big. ▶





4. How does your invoicing/payments system work?

We usually bill in arrears monthly based on the work completed. But we will work in with your lender and the structure of your loan. Some banks operate a system of milestone payments (for example once the slab is down, the framing up, roof on, and house is watertight). We comply with the lender's requirements under our registered Master Builders contract.

5. How do you deal with post-design changes?

We are very keen to minimise or even eliminate post-design changes and we put in the hard yards to make sure every detail is covered. It's a lot of work but it is the only way we can give an accurate projection on costs. In our experience, though, it is human nature to want to change some things once you see them right there in front of you. That is to be expected. Minor tweaks are normal and will be handled between the client and the design manager. Generally, these are implementation details (for example moving a light switch) and can be accommodated free of extra charges and discussed at regular meetings. A costed change comes about when clients want to add in a feature, upgrade a product or alter the design in some way. This will be priced up and then signed off by the client.

6. Do you have any recommendations for the type of land to purchase?

A dream site has easy access and a readymade buildable platform. But those are not always available in the right location for the right price! Our advice to clients is always to spend as much money on the site as you can. You should love the land you're buying because you can't change it, whereas a house can be adapted to any section. Always account for the cost of siteworks on your chosen property to see how much you would have left over for the build. We can help clients with this: if you find a site you're considering, we can look at it online and in photos, consult the property file and flag any issues that might cost you a small fortune!

7. What do you see as the characteristics of a 'good' client?

Good clients are constructive in their relationship with us and usually very trusting. That is not to say they don't

ask fair questions, but they recognise our role and our expertise – we've done a lot of work in this arena – and trust that we are giving them fair and professional advice. They realise that building a home is a journey and that there will be ups and downs. They see things in a broader context and don't get too stressed out about the tiny details. They understand that this is construction, and issues will arise, but that they will also be ironed out over the course of the build. Because Box™ has designers and builders under the same umbrella, we own our mistakes and take the responsibility for fixing them. A good client is someone who understands that when things are rushed, that's when mistakes happen. They realise that, while to slow it down might mean missing a deadline, things need to be taken at the right pace. A good client is someone who enjoys the process, who is positive and open-minded, who understands that, when it comes to building, it isn't all black and white; there are some grey areas. Each location, each house is different, but things will be worked through and, at the end of the day, you're going to get a cracking house.

8. What are the most common things that can go wrong?

There is a difference between what is common and what is critical. Things that tend to go wrong are usually operational and don't have huge consequences – such as getting a specification for a paint colour incorrect or a level wrong. What is important and more problematic if it goes awry is ascertaining the right budget. That's why, in the prototype stage, we have processes to flag all the things that could go wrong which would have serious impacts on the budget. We make sure to identify risks and cost implications. Most of these relate to the wraparound aspects of the project, rather than the house itself – things such as site stability, land issues with natural hazards such as flooding or archaeological finds, and resource consent hurdles. Because Box™ is both architect and builder on the project, we look at design and construction holistically, at how it impacts the budget and the quality of the result. There is a naturally co-operative relationship rather than the adversarial one that sometimes occurs when parties are not operating under the same banner. This is another important buffer to what can and does go wrong. ■



Tony Borland-Lye
Head of the Box™ Design Team

The cutting-room floor

There are some projects that get so far and then, for one reason or another, are given the chop. Here Box™ architect Tony Borland-Lye laments two exciting homes that never got to step into the spotlight



METRO MARVELLOUS

In the city-fringe suburb of Grey Lynn, there is heritage, and there are people who appreciate contemporary design. So getting a new home across the line with council in this area is a little trickier. This house was designed to be respectful of the surrounding villas. Box™ seldom employs the gabled form, but here that was the perfect fit. The roofline echoes the heritage of the suburb, neatly complies with height-to-boundary restrictions on the incredibly narrow site and packs a lot of storage beneath its V-shaped pitch.

Horizontal weatherboards, again not typical of the Box™ aesthetic (we usually go for vertical), are more neighbourly, too and we envisaged coloured glass panels in the front entrance – a nostalgic nod to Victoriana. Corrugated roofing finished off the copycat classic.

It did not matter that the building was only five metres wide; clever planning over two storeys created 250 square metres of living with bedrooms above and kitchen/dining and two living spaces below. The top floor cantilevers over the lower to create shelter and shade, and there's a private north-facing courtyard and trees from the street to keep it leafy and lovely. You'd never guess you were 10 minutes from town.

Asked why he chose this house to highlight in our cutting-room section, Tony could only say the balance and proportions were satisfying, and that today's take on the classical worked. "I felt we had a really good shot of getting this approved by council planners. It's sensitive to history but still feels contemporary. I would definitely live in it."



COAST & COUNTRY

Designing an escape far from the madding crowd is always a privilege, but this site in Piha had something special about it. Accessed via a vertiginous driveway, the hairy journey to the top was worth the angst. “The section was nestled into bush where there was so much birdlife, but it also caught a peep of the sea,” says Tony. The clients, a couple who are sociable sorts, were enthusiastic and involved. He couldn’t wait to get his drawing pad out and start sketching.

A magnificent pōhutukawa out front was joyfully retained as an L-shaped configuration took shape; this accommodates the specimen tree and stretches out towards the sea. The house can loosely be described as a collection of cantilevered cubes and is set over two levels. The ground floor contains a guest suite, and an all-important parking spot and watertank were slotted in beneath the upper level. This second storey is the main event with a living zone that gets a prime seat for the

garden outlook. A wedge-shaped deck on the north-east elevation provides shelter from prevailing winds and connects to the dining area for all that alfresco entertaining that was planned.

The dwelling, with vertical timber cladding on a concrete-block base, incorporated another Box™ signature move: the monopitch roof. “We wanted a low-key design to blend into the environment,” says Tony. Inside, understatement was a key driver: a nicely raked ceiling with plywood panels kept it real.

Sadly, before this fun project could launch, circumstances beyond the owners’ control meant they had to part with the section. But Tony will always remember it as a place of privacy and peacefulness. ■



Dan Heyworth
Founder | New Projects

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Talking dollars and sense is what we do from the outset of a project



When you're considering who will design and build what is probably the biggest investment of your life, cost is always front of mind, so it's bound to come up sooner or later. We prefer sooner. Really we do.

When the inevitable question arises, "How much does a Box™ house cost?" we want to give you as accurate an answer as possible. After two decades in business, we know a thing or two about budgeting. How do we know? By seeing the future in the past.

At Box™, we use a system called 'back-costing' where we put previous projects through a process to ensure we compare apples with apples. Only by understanding how costs have been historically apportioned can we hope to give a truthful representation to would-be clients.

In our most recent research, we analysed 37 homes that Box™ delivered between November 2017 and July 2021, compiling a spreadsheet with reference points such as: project location; whether the site was flat or sloping; the size of the home; how many levels it had; its cladding; how much decking.

The information is presented in four 'buckets': pre-construction; siteworks; house; external works.



Dan discusses this in detail on a You Tube blog: <https://tinyurl.com/vdmsn5nw>

Pre-construction includes the design component plus fees such as building consent, engineers and all those bits of paper required before the ground is shovel ready.

Siteworks involves everything it takes to make the section ready for the house build including foundations, drainage and the driveway.

The **'house'** bucket contains every item required to deliver the job to turnkey stage including fixed appliances and even the painting (there's no fiscal hole in our bucket!).

Finally, **external works** are the decking, fences, railing and external staircases. Importantly, all numbers include GST.

Together, these are the Total Project Price – a number more comprehensive and useful than a cost-per-square-metre rate that is often quoted but doesn't usually reflect reality, in that parts of the puzzle are ignored or overlooked. For those of you who have read this far, here's the current 'magic' number: \$4k - \$5k per square metre (house only). Preconstruction, Siteworks and External Works still need to be factored in, but typically, projects

are being delivered at between \$5,500 and \$7,000 per sqm as a Total Project Price.

This unique Box™ methodology is a better way to predict financials and we can filter results to draw some interesting conclusions. For example, we can say with some certainty that the smaller the house, the higher the cost per square metre (makes sense really). However, that doesn't mean you should build a McMansion. Our spreadsheets tell us the sweet spot is around 170-180 square metres.

Some results are surprising: delving into the data, we discovered that 13% of the overall budget was spent on developing a flat site as opposed to 17% on a sloping or steep site. We anticipated that divergence would be a lot larger, however the data also shows that sloping site builds generally have larger overall budgets. Decking was 5% of budget on a flat site and 6% on a sloping one. Again, not much difference.

Talking turkey (or should that be turnkey?) is such an integral part of our relationship with clients that the foundations need to be solid. Because if we get the maths right, and the figures agreed, our collective focus can turn to the fun part of crafting a home that puts you and your family at its heart. ■



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