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## Architectural Design: A PORCH TO ENHANCE YOUR HOME

By Bruce Westworth, AIA



*A porch is a practical way to add livable space to your home, and if in the front, to enhance the curb appeal of your home's facade.*

A well-crafted, nicely-designed porch is both aesthetic and functional, and more than just a roofed-over-deck. During warm weather months, a porch will make your home feel larger as it provides an extra room. If a porch overlooks a rear garden, it gives a home a bit of design whimsy and romance, similar to the architectural folly found in an English garden. A more formal porch can enhance your home's street presence, while a beautiful front porch often becomes the architectural focus of a home's facade. If a porch is screened in, it merges the outdoors and indoors as one room, providing your family with a place to enjoy a meal al fresco without the threat of bugs or intense sun. A properly designed porch will enhance the architectural integrity of a home and make it feel more upscale.

When designing a porch addition, paying attention to the historical architectural style of your home can be the guide

to the best design solution. Whether your home is a Colonial Revival, Tudor, or Contemporary, every porch addition should be considered on a case-by-case basis. A proper design solution can only be determined after the architect's analysis of your home's style and the way you intend to use the space are reviewed. When it comes to older homes, there are no one-size-fits-all porch additions. Each porch should be personal and suited to your lifestyle—whether the screened porch is needed for family gatherings and meals or you want to give your home more street presence with a covered front entry.

Porches tend to be smaller scale, intimate spaces, and the materials used should be of high quality as well as practical and low-maintenance. If the porch is the first thing visitors see, then it should definitely be made of high quality materials, such as brick, flagstone, redwood or fiberglass columns, iron or

aluminum railings, and a copper-clad or slate roof. For older, period-style homes, we often use bead-board material for the ceiling. For sun control, you might consider louvered wall panels.

With a casual and whimsical rear porch, you have more flexibility in material choices. A rear porch is often larger than a front porch and provides the ideal entertainment space in the privacy of your backyard. Here you might choose a wood-framed floor elevated on brick piers, exposed beam ceiling, simple post columns, screens to keep out insects, wood railings, and even a skylight for more natural light. Low maintenance, durable composite materials are also a wise choice when building a new porch.

With the right porch, especially one with the charm of an old beach house, you may never want to leave home for vacation, but instead stay put enjoying the carefree atmosphere and extra space that a porch provides.

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