

Top 2020 Architecture Trends

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Sustainable design and building highlighted the architecture trends of 2019 and will continue to do so into the coming year. As architectural design moves toward smaller houses, look for more open-concept and multifunctional spaces in 2020 as well as an increasing commitment to zero-energy residences.

Looking Back: Architecture Trends of 2019

Smaller, multifunctional spaces and built-in storage.

It's not just on TV that homeowners have been doing more with less (think HGTV's Tiny House, Big Living). A new generation of homeowners is intent on avoiding the McMansions of previous generations in favor of smaller homes that not only exhibit a **decreased environmental footprint** but can **do more with less space**. That means **multifunctional living spaces** (for relaxing, cooking, and telecommuting) and lots of built-in storage.



Architects have responded to clients' desires for homes with smaller footprints, often in urban areas where space is at a premium already, with architectural styles that incorporate a lot of natural lighting to create a sense of spaciousness even in small rooms, multilevel living, and innovative built-in storage solutions that often go so far as to stow beds and chairs when not in use.

Cultured Stone has helped many architects meet the challenges of small-space design by providing stone veneer features in shades of white and bright gray to enhance the sense of lightness and space while still providing texture in smaller rooms and buildings. **Pro-Fit® Alpine LedgeStone** in **Winterhaven™** offers a real stone feel without being oppressive, while **Cultured Brick® Veneer—Handmade Brick in Canvas™** gives a light-reflecting yet industrial edge to the warmth of traditional brick, making it ideal for use in smaller spaces.

Rehabilitated spaces and local sourcing.

With the increased attention on reducing environmental footprints when designing and building residential architecture, more and more designers have been reinventing existing spaces. Rather than starting from scratch, the new architecture trend of 2019 was to rehabilitate existing structures for a modern family—whether that meant turning a factory into industrial-style apartments or redesigning a mid-century modern home for the social demands and trends of today's families.

Rehabilitating existing structures not only reduces environmental impacts but may also reduce costs compared to entirely new construction and offers **tax incentives** for both builders and homeowners.



And while we often think of natural and locally sourced materials as more environmentally friendly, this isn't always the case. Architects and builders have faced increasing challenges in making sure adaptive reuse, local sourcing, and natural materials actually are more responsible choices. In some cases, **man-made materials have represented better choices for making what's old new again**, whether that's replacing damaged slate roofing with metal or replacing crumbling stone features with faux stone.

Industrial Design

While rustic farmhouse style has been dominating residential architecture for several years, industrial design moved firmly into the residential space in 2019. Defined by asymmetrical forms in architectural design and construction as well as the melding of textures like metal, wood, and even plastic, the trending homes of the last year have been all about smooth and simple lines and the absence of surface elements and disruptions.

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Cultured Stone's **Sculpted Ashlar** in **Silver Shore** played easily into this trend with architects employing the manufactured stone as a full-wall backdrop in modern kitchens. The result is a smooth gray surface in a sleek, modern kitchen that takes the place of the usual tile or wallpaper.



What's Coming in 2020?

Net-zero Will Hit the Mainstream

The U.S. Energy Information Administration reports the building sector was responsible for nearly 40 percent of energy consumption in the United States in 2017. This is enough to give anyone in the building industry pause when it comes to creating more sustainable buildings and will, along with homeowner demand, fuel the construction of significantly more **net-zero residences** in the coming years.

California is leading the way in **requiring new residential construction to be net-zero starting in 2020**. And while there are no such mandates in the other 49 states as of yet, net-zero construction has become increasingly common and stands to be the norm in new construction in the coming decades. In fact, the **Rocky Mountain Institute** indicates that in the next few years, it will likely be no more expensive to build a net-zero home than a conventionally built one.

This means starting building projects with smart design and energy modeling. Doing so will help establish the best siting for homes to take advantage of natural energy savings (like passive solar heating), **the most sustainable materials**, and the best options for no-cost energy (from solar to geothermal).

Open Concept to Segmentation Without Walls

While open floor plans have been a design trend in residential architecture for decades now, the last year has seen an increasing move toward interior architectural styles that, while still wedded to open concept design, offer more defined spaces...without walls. This means architects are using shifts in building materials (perhaps a freestanding fireplace dividing a living space from a dining area or a transition from hardwood floors to tile) to segment spaces within the home.



There are endless options for establishing transitions between spaces without using actual walls. Consider a kitchen island that separates cooking space from family activity space, like a sleek and modern kitchen island with a **Pro-Fit® Modera™ LedgeStone** base that divides the cooking area from the living room, while a fireplace of the same faux stone serves to nevertheless unite the spaces.

Architects may also use differing materials to define spaces, perhaps moving from flat painted walls in a dining room to an accent wall of faux stone that establishes a living area as a separate space or transitioning from a tile floor in a kitchen to a complementary wood floor in an adjacent open-concept dining space.

While stonework, natural or manufactured, can play a major role in the definition of individual spaces within an open-space framework, manufactured stone provides a simpler and more sustainable option. Manufactured stone is a more versatile design component for architects and builders, offering an easier installation process and providing an **earth-friendly alternative to natural stone**.

As you plan your next building project for 2020, Cultured Stone's **client onboarding questionnaire** can help guide you and your clients toward new architecture trends in the design of sustainable and beautiful homes.

Best Project Management Software for Architects | Our Picks

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At Cultured Stone, we know that project management tools can be a pain point for many architectural firms. How do you find a tool that does the job while also being simple to use? We have some tips....

In this article, you will learn...

- Why you should consider adopting project management software
- How to select the right project management tools for your firm
- Options on top-rated project management software tools for architects

Are you among the many architects still using Excel to manage projects? If so, you're not alone. Plenty of architectural firms (and construction companies) use Excel for project management. Yet according to the [37th Annual Deltek Clarity Architecture and Engineering Industry Study](#), 43 percent of surveyed firms indicated poorly executed project management procedures were a leading cause of projects going over budget. Why then aren't more architectural firms employing more seamless project management solutions?

At Cultured Stone, we've worked with many architects and home builders who lean heavily on project management software to support their speed, efficiency, and profitability. (Speaking of which, check out our blog post on [8 project management tips to stay on time and profitable.](#))

The reason so many firms rely on Excel are manifold. Architectural firms can't find software that seamlessly integrates with existing accounting systems or processes. They find it hard to justify the expenditure of funds (and time) in implementing the software—both the initial purchase and ongoing updates as well as training employees. And some firms see themselves as too niche for off-the-shelf software to provide the tools they need.

Related Reading: Architectural Trends: Looking Back and Predictions for 2018

Reasons to Consider Project Management Software

All that said, there are some critical reasons you might consider adopting an architectural project management system beyond Excel:

- **Speed.** There's no doubt about it. Entering data by hand takes time, time that could be better spent on direct revenue generation. The quicker you can input data, the quicker you can get value from it. Not to mention, the time you gain to focus on the project at hand.
- **Ease.** Excel spreadsheets have a lot of capabilities, but you really need an expert to manipulate them effectively. There's a pretty high learning curve for proficiency in Excel when it comes to estimating project costs.
- **Automation.** An Excel solution is only as good as the person using it. Human error has its costs, and one inaccurate entry could turn into a mistake worth tens of thousands of dollars (maybe more).
- **Consistency.** Project management software allows for standardization of processes, which could save countless man hours in your firm. It also reduces the need for data entry where numbers are always the same. Project management systems will maintain a historical record, too, so you can more easily evaluate, price, and plan projects similar to those you've completed in the past.

Questions to Ask Before You Invest

As you evaluate project management software, here are some key questions to help you choose the right option for your firm:

- Will the software make work easier and offer real-time project management?
- Does the software have a reputation for accuracy, and will it improve tracking and accountability?
- Can the project management software be integrated with other tools you are using like your accounting or estimating software?
- What is the total cost of software ownership? How is it licensed? Traditional license with annual support or periodic subscription? Is it available on the cloud so that updates are continuous as opposed to having to upgrade the software every few years? How is it delivered? Do you install it, or is it SaaS offered via commercial cloud?
- Is the project management system intuitive and easy to learn and use so that you'll garner employee buy-in? Is reliable technical support available for training and troubleshooting?
- Is the system accessible via mobile devices so your team can use it in the field?

Top Picks for Project Management for Architects

Keep the above questions in mind as you investigate project management tools for your firm. Meanwhile, here are some of our top picks for project management software for architects:

- **BQE Core:** Formerly known as ArchiOffice, BQE Core is a project management tool designed for architects with the goal of automating and increasing efficiencies on administrative tasks like document management, time tracking, and invoicing. Core puts all these pieces in one place and also has endless options for customization, making it especially ideal for niche firms that struggle to find off-the-shelf tools that meet their needs. Another big advantage? It has integrations for RFIs and ASIs built into it.
- **Primavera:** Oracle's Primavera was designed with builders, architects, and engineers in mind. It offers complex calculation tools for estimating and budgeting and also has sophisticated scheduling tools, making it a good solution for firms working on large projects with multiple team members and many moving parts. It's an ideal software for large firms, not so much for smaller players in the field, and it doesn't have the most intuitive interface, so it will involve a learning curve.
- **Monday.com:** While not designed exclusively for architectural firms, Monday.com does stand up well as an architecture software tool because of its proposal, document, and client management features. It offers budget management, time tracking, and task tracking and offers an intuitive and easy-to-learn interface that makes it more user-friendly than many project management tools. It also integrates well with tools like Google Drive, Dropbox, and Excel. Architects give Monday.com high marks for its mobile platform, which mirrors the desktop experience almost precisely, making it easy to use in the field and on the go without an additional learning curve.
- **Deltek Ajera:** Both a project management system and accounting tool built specifically for architects and engineers, Deltek Ajera offers a two-in-one solution for firms that may be looking for a fully integrated product to replace both Excel and current accounting software. Because project reporting is fully integrated with your firm's financial information, this software can increase efficiencies when it comes not just to time tracking and invoicing but also long-term strategic planning. The software offers mobile timesheets and expense reporting, too, making it efficient and easy-to-use for project architects on job sites.
- **WorkflowMax:** Though not developed exclusively for architects, WorkflowMax offers an all-in-one project management tool across an array of professional services. It offers contract, proposal, and document management. Additionally, it provides budget and resource management, collaboration tools, and time and task management. Among its standout features is its customizable project forecasting tool, which allows firms to track out by a single project or by multiple phases within a project. WorkflowMax, however, does not offer Gantt Charts and Kanban Boards.
- **Newforma:** Built specifically for architects and engineers, Newforma is nifty as a project management tool because it integrates with AutoCad and Revit. It is not as complete a project management tool as the above options, however. Architects report a tricky search function, lack of sufficient customization, and a difficult-to-learn interface. But many firms give it high ratings for tracking submittals, RFIs, and drawings.

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Regardless of the project management tool you select, the more you can automate functions and standardize and integrate processes, the more time you'll have for work that builds your firm's bottom line.

For more help with project success, download our free [Client Onboarding Questionnaire](#). Cultured Stone also offers an array of online resources to help you better manage projects and serve your clients, including consulting on the installation of manufactured stone veneer.

For more tips on managing the home building process, download Cultured Stone's "Are You Ready to Start Building?" checklist.

9 Signs It's Time for a Home Remodel

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Are you feeling frustrations with your existing home but don't necessarily want to move? It may be time for a home remodel. Here are nine signs that you're ready.

You love your home and its location and neighborhood, but maybe it's showing its age with outdated fixtures and cabinetry in the kitchen or a layout that harkens back to the 1970s. Or perhaps your circumstances have changed and you have new household members—a baby or an elderly parent joining your family unit.

You know you need to change *something*. But how do you know if you're really ready to do it (as opposed to just selling and moving)? And where do you even start with a home remodel?

Here's a home remodeling checklist to help you decide if it's time to start renovating your house and interviewing home remodeling contractors:

1. Your home exhibits clear signs of deterioration.

Sometimes a home remodeling is a necessity. It might be that there are structural issues as a result of deterioration like a leaking roof, rotting floorboards on a front porch, or fireplace and foundation repointing needs. Or it could be that your carpets are showing a decade or more of wear and weathering, or tiles are detaching in a kitchen or bathroom.

Home deterioration issues shouldn't be neglected, as they can not only lead to more expensive problems down the road (like a roof, foundation, or porch failure), but they're probably also impacting your happiness with the home and ability to resell it down the road.

2. You have the funds to do it.

Renovating a home requires a financial investment, especially if you're planning a significant remodel like a kitchen renovation or an addition. If you have sufficient equity in your home, you may be able to cover the costs of renovation with a home equity loan. Talk to your financial institution about your options for financing a remodel.

3. You plan on staying in the home long enough to see a return on investment.

If your kids are in high school and you think you'll downsize after they graduate or you have a job that requires regular relocation, remodeling might not make sense.

If you're thinking about a major home renovation that requires substantial financial investment, be sure you're not only going to enjoy the benefits of that remodel for years to come, but that you also have a chance of recouping some of the costs when you sell. If you spend \$100,000 to upgrade your kitchen and then decide to sell your house two years later, you're not going to get much of that investment back when you sell.

However, some remodeling options have a high return on investment, including installation of custom garage doors and creating a custom stone façade with manufactured stone veneer.

4. You need more space.

Perhaps your family (or lifestyle) has grown since you bought your current home, or maybe your kids have gotten old enough that they want more privacy and the house just feels too small for everyone in it.

If it feels like your family members are all crawling on top of one another, it's probably time to enlist an architect to help you either plan for a change in layout (like opening up walls to create larger living spaces), or make a home addition (if you have space on your lot to do so).

5. Your home feels out of date.

Maybe it's the 30-year-old bright brass fixtures in the bathroom, or perhaps it's the linoleum in the kitchen. Is your living room fireplace a throwback to the 1960s? Does your kitchen feel like a cave because of dark-stained cabinets?

If you feel like your home needs to catch up with the times, then chances are a remodel is in order. Whether that's a complete kitchen redo with upgraded cabinets in airy white, or brushed nickel fixtures, or a living room upgrade with a modern stone veneer fireplace remodel and a layer of new carpeting and fresh paint in contemporary colors.

Not only will remodeling your house for a more modern aesthetic make you feel happier in your environment, it also will help you retain (or maybe even boost) your residence's value.

Related Reading - [Green Building Materials: 5 Sustainable Resources for Your Next Project](#)

Enjoy the Build by Going in Prepared

BE PREPARED FOR EACH STEP OF THE PROCESS.

Get the 13 Crucial Questions to Ask Yourself Before Building a Custom Home

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CUSTOM HOME BUILDING CHECKLIST: 13 Things to Know Before You Start Building
 This checklist is designed to help you understand the process of building a custom home and to ensure you are prepared for each step of the process. It covers everything from site selection and financing to construction and final inspection.

6. Your space isn't functioning properly.

Do you get frustrated every time you cook a meal because you don't have sufficient counter space in your kitchen? Do you feel like you're overwhelmed with clutter and don't have sufficient storage room? If your home environment isn't functioning well for everyday life, you might consider hiring an architect to help you figure out why and what you can do about it.

Maybe you need to open up your kitchen and put in a bar for more storage and workspace. Perhaps you need a walk-in closet or two or a built-in entertainment center around the fireplace in your living room.

If your space isn't complementing your lifestyle, it may be time for a renovation.

7. You're not using all the space that you have.

Perhaps you have a guest bedroom that hasn't seen a guest in 10 years. Or maybe your dining room sees a set table only once a year for a holiday gathering. If you have significant unused space in your home, consider how you might make it more functional. Perhaps you can pull down a wall between a master bath and a little used guest room to create a large master suite with a deep soaking tub or luxurious shower.

Or maybe if you open up the space between your dining room and kitchen, you can gain not only more kitchen space but an eating area that's clearly joined to where you are cooking, making for a better entertaining space as opposed to a formal dining room where you rarely eat.

Related Reading - [Architectural Trends: Looking Back and Predictions for 2018](#)

8. You're emotionally attached to your home even though it's not meeting your current needs.

If you have a strong emotional attachment to your home and neighborhood, renovating your house is probably a better idea than selling and moving. Perhaps you live in a close-knit neighborhood surrounded by people you've come to trust. Maybe your kids are thriving in the local school. Or perhaps this is the home where your children were born, and it holds emotional significance for you.

Whatever the reason, if your home is tugging your heart strings, it's probably better to talk to an architect and get some home remodeling ideas to help the house better suit your current lifestyle than to make a move elsewhere.

9. You can tolerate a temporary disruption in lifestyle.

Renovating a house is messy and time-consuming, especially if it involves a kitchen remodel or home addition.

Can you tolerate your home being a construction site for three to six months? If you're getting a kitchen remodel, do you have workable and affordable options for cooking and eating while the project is underway?

Make sure you and your family members understand the temporary inconvenience involved, and be certain you're all on board with the benefits to be gained from the disruption of a home remodel.

If your frustration levels with your current residence are too high, or a remodel isn't an option (because your building lot is too small or there just isn't a way to rework a space to your liking), then it might be time to consider a move or a custom build. In that case, check out our [Custom Home Building Checklist](#) for guidance on how and where to start!