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Who Owns the Plans? Owners, Architects and Engineers, and the Federal Law of Copyright

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Bob has been saving up for his dream home his entire life. While not an architect himself, he follows architecture trends and visits buildings designed by Frank Lloyd Wright and I.M. Pei. After purchasing a plot of land on a hillside with a view of one of California's fertile wine-growing regions, he contacts an architect to convert his crude sketches and ideas into usable blueprints. They execute the standard, unaltered form contract of architectural services provided by the American Institute of Architects. The architect then completes the plans and the house is built. Bob is now living in a beautiful and unique house that reflects his personal style. Several years later, someone purchased the lot next door. Because Bob's house is so impressive, the neighbor also buys the blueprints from Bob's architect and announces his intention to erect an identical home. Has Bob's one-of-a-kind dream home become a model home nightmare, or does he have the right to claim ownership of the design and stop the copycat neighbor?

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