

Expounding on the Process

At the heart of every successful project is a strong relationship between Client and Architect. We as architects know that the more knowledgeable our clients are, the more likely they are to fully participate in the process and enjoy the benefits of a collaborative effort. The following material covers topics related to finding and working with an architect and managing your project and the design process. Time spent here will pay off in improved results for your project.

What do Architects do?

You have a vision of what you want. Now you need to make that vision a reality. Here's how we can help you: We see the big picture. We are specially educated to help you define what you want to build, present options you might never have considered, and help you get the most for your valuable investment.

We don't just design four walls and a roof - we create total environments, both interiors and exteriors, that are functional and exciting places in which to work and live. We solve problems creatively. We are trained to be problem solvers. Need more room for your growing business? We can show you how to enlarge your existing building, so you won't have to move. Have a limited budget? We can propose ways to get more for your investment than you may have imagined possible.

Building is a long process that is often messy and disruptive, particularly if you're staying in the space while it's under construction. We represent you, not the contractors. We look out for your interests and smooth the process; help find qualified construction contractors; and visit the worksite to help protect you against work that's not according to plan.

Finding the Right Architect

Each architect has an individual style, approach to design and a method of work. So, it's important to find an architect who is compatible with your style and needs. Get recommendations from friends, relatives and acquaintances who have worked with architects. Check to make sure the architect is licensed to practice in the State in which you wish to build. Like doctors and lawyers, architects are licensed professionals.

The title "Architect" may be used only by an individual who possesses a state license to practice architecture. Architects are the only professionals in the construction industry who are ethically bound to represent you, the building owner. Only those professionals who have fulfilled the rigorous requirements as stipulated by each individual state, may legally call themselves architects and practice architecture in the jurisdiction granting the license. Individuals may be registered, or licensed, in more than one state by means of reciprocal licensing agreements among the states. We subscribe to the industry standard's professional conduct to assure our clients, the public and colleagues of our dedication to high standards in professional practice.

Managing the Process from Start to Finish

When building or renovating, you need someone who can both see the big picture and understand your project in detail, someone who will look after your interests in what is likely to be unfamiliar territory. No handshake or letter of agreement is firm enough to cover all the roles, responsibilities, and obligations that must be carried out in your building project. We can efficiently prepare construction documents, detailed drawings, and specifications that the contractor will use to establish construction costs and build the project.

Depending on the project we use AIA documents or a variation of such. These standard forms of agreement indicate the current consensus among construction industry leaders representing owners, contractors, engineers, and architects. Many details are covered in clear language that is widely known and accepted in the design and construction industry.

Selecting a Reputable Contractor

We are familiar with the abilities and reputations of the contractors in your area. In many cases, we share long standing working relationships which can help promote reliability and quality work. Or, if you wish to choose among several qualified contractors, we can prepare the necessary bidding documents. We can help you determine which bid may give you the best value in terms of the contractor's reputation, expertise, quality of work, and reliability.

Interpreting Contract Requirements

Due to their complexity and technical nature, construction projects are typically described in language and symbols that are unfamiliar to the average homeowner. We understand the language of construction and can help you protect yourself from incorrect interpretations of contract requirements by the contractor. The general conditions of most construction contracts assign us the role of a shortstop intermediary in disputes between you and a contractor before a controversy goes to formal arbitration or litigation.

Managing the Bidding Process

We can help provide a sense of fairness in the bidding process that is appreciated by both contractors and our clients. By organizing the project requirements clearly, we can help minimize the possibility for bidders to misinterpret your project's requirements. You and your architect have worked hard to envision your project. With our additional assistance, you can expect that a bidder's proposal matches the project scope that you have in mind.

Evaluating Contractors' Proposals

As the Owner you may suspect that a bid that is 30 percent lower than all others might seem the best deal. However, we would immediately suspect that the bidder omitted something from the bid, made a mathematical error, or did not prepare the bid carefully. You might assume that a low bidder has to do the project for the bid amount. But we understand that builders can make commitments they sometimes cannot fulfill. For a building project to be a success, it is crucial that the contractor selection process consider all factors.

Identifying Construction Problems Early On

Everyone can make mistakes, and not all problems can be foreseen when pen meets paper. When a project runs smoothly, problems discovered during construction are quickly corrected. Of all the members on the project team, your architect has the best mental picture of how the project's components relate to each other and how to make those corrections. We have the experience to spot problems and deviations early on, before they can become too expensive or difficult to correct. The creative problem-solving skills

provided by your architect during the project design stage are still available to you during the construction phase. With your architect personally administrating construction, you get informed reports of the project's progress, a trained eye toward quality control and protection against work that is not according to plan. With any building project, the familiar caution holds true: Expect the unexpected. Unanticipated problems - and opportunities - will arise during the course of construction. With an intimate knowledge of your project's history, your architect is a valuable asset in seizing new opportunities that are consistent with your design objectives.

Determining When the Project is Complete

Evaluating the point at which a project is complete is not as simple as it seems. In the last stages of construction, both you and the contractor are tired and eager to move on. Your contractor may consider a project is complete sooner than you. Your architect can weigh the state of completion against the contract requirements and fairly note any items that remain to be completed. Naturally, there can be tension between a contractor's desire to get paid as much as possible as soon as possible, and your need to see that payments are in proper proportion to the work that is completed. We have the expertise to assess the contractor's payment requests fairly. As your adviser, we can help prevent overpayment so that the contractor doesn't get paid until all obligations to you are fulfilled.

To Renovate or Not to Renovate?

We can help you decide. The costs of renovating should be weighed against the value of your existing building, neighborhood real estate values and the availability of other properties that could meet your needs. Many times, renovations are not, or are just barely, cost effective. It's easy for renovation projects to snowball when you begin to consider existing utilities, wiring, insulation, and windows - even finishing touches such as window coverings, furnishings, and artwork.

Meeting with us to plan your renovation sets the stage for building cost-efficiency into your project. By setting parameters early in the renovation process, we can help you control costs before construction begins. We will help you understand how you use the space you have now, and how you'll use the space you want to create through the renovation. Do you want formal, quiet space separate from common areas or airy, informal space? Have you thought about how the renovated space could be designed to fit your business as it changes in the future?

Seeing Through Walls and Floors

Behind those walls and beneath that floor can lie potential problems, especially in older buildings; plumbing, wiring, heating ducts and foundations. It's important to consider how these systems might be affected by your renovation and the potential effect this could have on your budget. Outdated wiring may not support the increased power needs of your modern operations. A new kitchen or restrooms might require considerable rerouting and replacement of existing plumbing. Or, a weak foundation might have to be reinforced to support an addition. We take such possibilities into account when assessing your situation and developing a design, which can help avoid costly surprises later when you're under construction.

Visiting the Job Site and Administering Construction

Our involvement doesn't end with preparing drawings for the renovation. As your advisor and agent, we will visit the site to protect you against work that is not according to plan. With our observing construction, you get informed reports of the project's progress, a trained eye toward quality control and even a check on the contractor's invoices - mandating that the contractor does not get paid until the architect is satisfied that the contractor has fulfilled all obligations to you.