



How to Hire an Architect

1 Finding the right Architect

Like many other fields, word of mouth is the best way to look for an architect. Ask family, friends and professional colleagues for referrals. Is there a particular home you admire? A knock on the door can yield an introduction to your project's potential architect. Professional organizations such as your city or country's local architectural institutions are also great sources to find architects.

General contractors, interior design studios and other trade-related personnel would also be able to furnish some referrals. Be sure to visit web sites of your candidates. Look at their previous work. Get a feel for what is their design style and language – is it about blending in the neighborhood, is it environmentally sound designs or is it about making a big statement? Then, start a conversation. Make an appointment for a consultation. A face to face meeting will help you decide if it is a good fit.

2 An architect's biggest success and largest obstacle

How will the architect approach your project? Let them know the most important aspects of your project and ask how they will be incorporated into a process. Is the architect interested in your specific objectives, needs and wants? How do they handle critical aspects such as structural, mechanical and electrical engineering? Is interior design included and if so, to what level? Ask to see examples of what is typically included in their deliverables.

Make sure the architect really listens to your comments. There are many things they need to understand about you if the project is to be successful. Even though the architect might have an attractive portfolio and good references, you will still want to make sure their design process and approach is right for you and your project.



4 The Project Delivery Process

Projects go through a complex process from inception to completion. You need to have your architect explain the process and clarify what you can expect from each other at every stage. Understanding all of the steps can be important in setting aside sufficient time, and scheduling funds for the design and construction stages.



5 3-D modeling: Don't build your home without it

Architects understand how elevations and floor plans translate into actual buildings; their clients may not. A 3-D model is the best way to see how your new home will look when built. Software today allows design reviewing from multiple angles and room walkthroughs. Being able to work in 3-D helps clients get better involved in the design process. They also enjoy the viewing experience and “walking” through the space before it is built. Don't hesitate to ask for a 3-D model before the commencement of your

project. 3-D modeling is more than just a means to visualize your project. Building Information Modeling (BIM) is the most current form of integrated design that requires building a virtual replica of your design in the computer. The benefits of a BIM model promise a more integrated design that leads to more accurate and better coordinated designs, resulting in less on-site conflicts, fewer delays, and more economical pricing.



6 The full-service architectural firm



Conceptual renderings and blueprints are not the only services architectural and planning firms provide. Ask about other services your candidate's firm offers. Ask about benefits of specific services to you and their corresponding costs. Ask your architect if there are any additional services offered and how they could be useful to you for your particular project. If a firm doesn't offer a requested service, they should be able to refer a firm that does.

Below is a glimpse into some additional services a typical architectural firm provides:

- Project Feasibility Studies
- Space Programming
- Master Planning
- Traditional And Computer Renderings
- 3 Dimensional, Fly Through, Computer Visualization
- Leed® Coordination And Certification Assistance
- Detailed Cost Estimates
- Furniture, Furnishings & Equipment Specifications

The background of the slide is a detailed architectural floor plan of a building. The plan shows various rooms, corridors, and structural elements. It includes dimensions such as 4250, 8250, 1500, 1800, 2500, 3000, 3500, 4000, 4500, 5000, 5500, 6000, 6500, 7000, 7500, 8000, 8500, 9000, 9500, 10000, 10500, 11000, 11500, 12000, 12500, 13000, 13500, 14000, 14500, 15000, 15500, 16000, 16500, 17000, 17500, 18000, 18500, 19000, 19500, 20000, 20500, 21000, 21500, 22000, 22500, 23000, 23500, 24000, 24500, 25000, 25500, 26000, 26500, 27000, 27500, 28000, 28500, 29000, 29500, 30000, 30500, 31000, 31500, 32000, 32500, 33000, 33500, 34000, 34500, 35000, 35500, 36000, 36500, 37000, 37500, 38000, 38500, 39000, 39500, 40000, 40500, 41000, 41500, 42000, 42500, 43000, 43500, 44000, 44500, 45000, 45500, 46000, 46500, 47000, 47500, 48000, 48500, 49000, 49500, 50000, 50500, 51000, 51500, 52000, 52500, 53000, 53500, 54000, 54500, 55000, 55500, 56000, 56500, 57000, 57500, 58000, 58500, 59000, 59500, 60000, 60500, 61000, 61500, 62000, 62500, 63000, 63500, 64000, 64500, 65000, 65500, 66000, 66500, 67000, 67500, 68000, 68500, 69000, 69500, 70000, 70500, 71000, 71500, 72000, 72500, 73000, 73500, 74000, 74500, 75000, 75500, 76000, 76500, 77000, 77500, 78000, 78500, 79000, 79500, 80000, 80500, 81000, 81500, 82000, 82500, 83000, 83500, 84000, 84500, 85000, 85500, 86000, 86500, 87000, 87500, 88000, 88500, 89000, 89500, 90000, 90500, 91000, 91500, 92000, 92500, 93000, 93500, 94000, 94500, 95000, 95500, 96000, 96500, 97000, 97500, 98000, 98500, 99000, 99500, 100000. The plan is overlaid with a semi-transparent grey bar at the top and bottom, and a vertical grey bar on the right side.

7 Figuring out the fee investment

Typically, an architect's fee is calculated as a percentage of the project's entire cost (minus the architect's fee, of course). Depending on the services provided by the architect, the rate could range from 5 to 15 percent. However, when you first start the design process for your project, it is difficult, if not impossible to accurately determine the final project cost. During this initial time period (before a good estimate of the final project cost is possible) the architect may charge an hourly fee or a retainer. The retainer or hourly fee may be credited towards the total architectural fee once it has been

determined. Billing monthly is the industry standard. Also, ask when payment is expected and the preferred method of payment, i.e. check, credit card, etc. Keep in mind that the architect's fee applies to all the costs of your project. Some examples of project costs are the construction budget as well as consultant fees such as environmental impact studies or structural engineering fees. The most important thing about fees is complete transparency. Insist upon it.



8 Hiring a Contractor

An experienced architect should have a list of contractors they have worked with in the past who have performed well. Your architect should be able to help you choose the best contractor for your project. Always get multiple bids on the construction of your project – even if you already have a contractor. This is an industry standard and gives you better leverage at the bargaining table. Additionally, having a contractor during the design process ensures you will not be building more than you can afford.

These tips are meant as a guide to choosing the best architect for your project. You will be working very closely with your architect on what may be one of the biggest investments of your life. Not only are an architect's answers to your questions important, but how they are answered speaks volumes, too. Did they take time for details to clear up any confusion? Did you feel comfortable with them? Did they conduct business in a transparent manner? The creation process is exciting but can get intimidating at times. Choosing the right team, however, can make it an enjoyable process. That team always starts with choosing the right architect and we hope these tips will help you do just that for your next project.

The Next Step

Congratulations! You now have the key information that will help you lay a successful foundation for understanding how to find and hire an architect.

Unfortunately, I can't include every important piece of information about this most important step in the design and construction process successfully in this guide.

Actually, that would be impossible because each project is unique and the requirements differ based on a multitude of factors. But with the 8 steps explained in this guide, you have the critical information to help you hire the architect that will ensure that your project is a success.

If you are in the process of looking for an architect for your project, let's talk. I can help you wade through the necessary requirements and make sure you aren't overlooking a crucial factor that could turn your project from success to failure. I offer a custom **needs and options review** where I will identify the specific requirements pertaining to your project and your available options.

Typically, the **needs and options review** saves my clients thousands of dollars and weeks of lost time, not to mention the stress and headache of getting something wrong.

To learn more about the **needs and options review** as well as the price for this service and why it is critically important to your project's success, please give me a call.

Best wishes for the success of your project!



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