



Selecting the Right
ARCHITECT
for Your Project

Welcome.

I prepared this guide to assist people during the initial decision making process for their construction project. Many people struggle with understanding the design and construction process. This process can seem like a complex and frightening roadblock for those who haven't been through it before. The first and most important step is to find and select the right architect for you.

Nothing is more exciting than creating new spaces, whether it's for your home or your work environment. Furthermore, nothing will affect the success of your project more than selecting the right architect. Your architect will assist you to determine the design and function of your building as well as ease the emotional toll and financial costs involved in its construction.

You may be wondering: how do I find the right architect for my project? Do I really need to hire an architect? How much are an architect's fees? What about contractors? And most importantly: what are the key, critical steps I need to take to ensure that I hire the architect that is the perfect match for my project?

In the following pages, you will discover the answers to these questions – and more. I hope you enjoy this guide and look forward to your feedback on the contents.

Bill Styczynski
Studio21 Architects



The Goal to Select the Right Architect

Finding your perfect match in an architect is not impossible and the following eight points can guide you along the way. Use these to help analyze the personality, design strategy, and communication skills of your candidates. Your goal is to find the right architect for your project, for your budget, and for you.

1. Finding an Architect

"Time spent on hiring, is time well spent."- Robert Half

Like many other professions, word of mouth is the best way to find an architect. Ask family, friends and professional colleagues for referrals. Is there a particular home you admire? A knock on the door can result in finding your project's potential architect. General contractors, interior designers and other trade-related personnel may also be able to furnish some referrals.

Be sure to visit websites of your candidates. Look at their previous work. Get a feel for their capability. Does the message they provide resonate with you? If it does, then start a conversation. Make an appointment for a consultation. Meeting face to face is imperative to help you decide if this architect is the right fit.

2. What is the Architect's Process?

"Perfection has to do with the end product, but excellence has to do with the process."- Jerry Moran

How will the architect approach your project? What is the process they will use to understand your needs and desires? Let them know the most important aspects of your project and ask how they will incorporate those aspects into the design process. If you are planning a home remodel or an addition, start with what aspects of your home you currently like and ask how they can be improved? Typically, a remodel should try and blend seamlessly with the rest of the home. Ask how will this be

achieved? 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.

3. Budget: Does Your Architect Talk About Your Budget?

"A budget is telling your money where to go instead of wondering where it went." - Dave Ramsey

One critical aspect of any project is an understanding of the construction costs. The best design can be derailed if you can't build what has been designed. The architect should be able to have an open and honest dialogue regarding budget early in the process. Ask your potential architect how they will work with your budget.

4. Meet Your Project Architect

"The dialogue between client and architect is about as intimate as any conversation you can have, because when you're talking about building a house, you're talking about dreams." - Robert A. M. Stern

Signing a contract with someone representing an architectural firm does not necessarily mean that person will be your project architect. Be sure to meet the project architect before making any final decisions. Being able to communicate freely and openly with your project architect is vital to the success of your project. You should share a clear understanding of the project with your architect and feel completely comfortable.

5. 3-D modeling: An Option for Better Visualization

"Architecture is inhabited sculpture."- Constantin Brancusi

Architects understand how elevations and floor plans translate into actual buildings; however, their clients can't necessarily envision this concept. A 3-D image is a great

way to see how your new home will look when built. Software today allows the design to be viewed from multiple angles and room walk-throughs. Being able to work in 3-D helps clients get better involved in the design process and they enjoy the viewing experience and “walking” through the space before it is built. It also allows you, the client, to make changes if you don’t like what you see. Ask your potential architect if they offer the option of a 3-D model during the selection process.

6. The Full-Service Architectural Firm

“Architecture is the story of how we see ourselves. It is the architect’s job to service everyday life.” - Thom Mayne

Conceptual renderings and blueprints are not the only services architectural 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 an architectural firm may provide:

- Project Feasibility Studies
- Programming
- Master Planning
- Zoning Approvals
- Computer Renderings
- 3 Dimensional or Fly Through Computer Visualization
- Detailed Cost Estimates
- Furniture, Furnishings & Equipment Specifications
- Construction Administration
- Full Design and Build Service: From Concept to Completed Construction

7. Fees

"If you think it's expensive to hire a professional to do the job, wait until you hire an amateur." - Red Adair

There are multiple ways various architects charge for their services. Some charge an hourly fee, others a percentage of the construction costs, still others a fee per square foot, and finally, some may charge a fixed fee based on a specific scope of services. All of these systems have their advantages and disadvantages. Discuss with your potential architect how they charge for their services and make sure you understand all of the implications. Regardless of the method used to charge for services, the lowest fee should never be the only factor when you select your architect.

8. Choose a Contractor or Utilize Design + Build Services

"Architecture is by definition a very collaborative process." - Joshua Prince-Ramus

An experienced architect should have a list of contractors they like to work with. Your architect should be able to help you choose the best contractor for your project. Having a contractor on board during the design process ensures you will not be building more than you can afford. You may also choose to bid to several contractors, typically no more than three. Some firms offer full Design+Build services in addition to traditional architectural services. If your architectural firm offers this option, the architect may not only design your new home but oversee its construction throughout the entire build process. It allows you to have your project managed from start to finish by one firm. Architect led Design+Build allows for superior design, better cost control, a single point of contact, faster delivery, and superior construction.

In Summary...

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. The architect's answers to your questions are important, but how they are answered speaks volumes, too. Did they take time to gather 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, however choosing the right team can make it an enjoyable process. That team always starts with choosing the right architect and we hope these tips will help you with that for your next project.