

## Working with an Architect

Items you should know or bring with you when you start to have a discussion with an Architect about a new project

- Budget
  - This will include the cost of construction and renovation, but may include other items to complete the project
  - Hard costs. The more physical side of construction. (the building construction itself, items not in contractor's budget)
  - Soft costs. The more intangible items (Design or legal fees, permits, surveys, loan interest, taxes, furniture, moving expenses)
  - Contingency. As much as we would like everything to come in on budget, there is always a risk of overages in construction.
- Scope of services you are looking for
  - Different firms may offer different scope of services
  - Do you need someone to help you through the whole design process, start to finish?
  - Are you just looking for someone to draw floor plan?
  - I have a separate document on the typical design process. This covers what to expect, how the design process typically works, and what the different phases are
- Who is the primary contact for the project?
  - Often different members of the ownership group will have different ideas and concepts. In the end there is only one building being built. Everyone from ownership must agree as to what they want, and having one person to communicate with is more helpful than having multiple people on the client site making different, potentially conflicting requests.
- The project schedule
- What is important in the project management or delivery? Cost, quality, or time?

- What is important to you?
  - This could be different for different people or projects. Each project has different goals; defining the goals at the beginning of the process is important.
  - Examples:
    - Pragmatic items: The project is completed in time for a critical date or that the project stays under a certain budget.
    - More experiential items: Having a sweeping vista down the valley; or having a large, luxurious living room.
  - Concepts and ideas
    - This is the fun part. Photos, examples, materials, stories. Things you have seen, places you have visited. What should the space be like?
    - Examples of what you don't like are equally important
    - Saving concept images and writing your likes and dislikes about each one can be a good place to start. (Lots of times I'll find a photo but there are only certain parts I like. Ex: I like the counter and cabinets, but the floor is too dark)
- Any site information. Photos, soil tests, a plat or survey if you have it (a plat or boundary survey will only show the property lines and buildings. A survey would show other items: contours, wires, piping, easements, etc)
- Are there other people on the project team who already are or will be selected? Contractor, decorator, A/V, or security?
- Other things you should know
  - Owners and Architects often look at things differently especially project completion and when changes can be made. If you hire an Architect to develop some drawings for you, their work is completed when they complete the drawings. To the owner the project isn't finished until the building or house is finished. Yes, it is certainly easier to change drawings rather than change a building; however changes at an inappropriate phase can result in additional design fees especially if the drawings are already completed.
  - Architects may be able to estimate the rough cost of construction; but the contractor sets the final price. Other factors like limited material supplies or all the contractors in the area being busy may affect the price beyond typical costs. In highly detailed, challenging, or cost conscious projects it may be beneficial to start talking with a contractor during the design process.