

# Being an Architect

*It's more than just buildings*

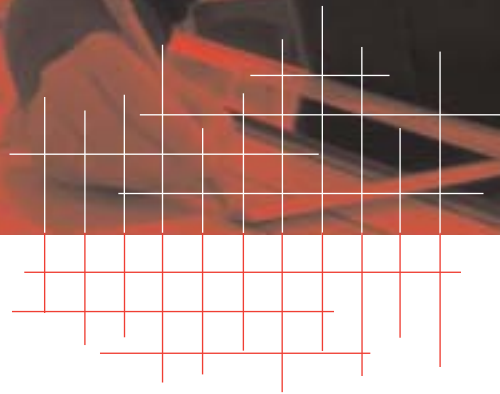
## WHAT AN ARCHITECT DOES

People need different places in which to live, work, play, learn, worship, shop, and eat. These places can be indoors or outdoors, big or small, quiet or loud, dark or light. These places can be by themselves (a farmhouse) or in a group (a city). An architect imagines spaces for all of life's activities and turns these ideas into drawings from which a builder can construct.

Randall Holl



Elizabeth Anderson



## THE DESIGN PROCESS

The process of imagining the shape of a building and all the spaces inside it is often called "design." Architects begin the design process by asking the owner, or client, about his or her building needs. Here are some questions the architect may ask:

- What activities will happen in or around the building?
- How many people will work there or visit there?
- How much money does the owner have to spend?
- How much time is there before the owner needs the building?
- How might the landscape and surrounding buildings affect the design?

Once these questions and more have been answered, the architect begins to generate ideas that are attuned to the owner's needs, and these ideas later grow into full-scale proposals. The architect's ideas may be shown to the owner as drawings, pictures, or models. Sometimes the architect has many ideas for one building, and the owner simply chooses the one that he or she likes best. During the design process, the architect also communicates with those who will use the building, such as office workers or school-teachers, and those who will build it, such as carpenters, plumbers, electricians, and painters.

Once the owner and architect agree on a building design, the architect draws very detailed drawings that show the builder the sizes and locations of building elements, which materials to use, and how the building should look. The architect then works with the builder during construction to answer any questions and to make sure that all is built according to plan.



## ARCHITECTURE

Architecture is the profession of designing buildings, communities and public spaces for specified purposes. It is also a process that involves many people from different professions to create the finished product. Architecture is all around us. Because we spend a large portion of our time inside of buildings, it is important that these are safe, healthy and beautiful places to be. Architecture also plays a significant part in world history. The examination of historical buildings can tell you much about the time and place in which they were built, the methods used and about the people who built them. Today, because of new construction technologies and building materials almost anything an architect can imagine can be built.

## BECOMING AN ARCHITECT

If you think you might like to be an architect, try looking at buildings in a different way. After studying a building, a room, or an area between two buildings for a few minutes, try to notice colors, textures, shapes, shadows, spaces, and different materials such as brick, glass, and wood. How do you feel when you are in these spaces? Do you feel safe or scared, or that you should be quiet or loud? By thinking about your reactions to the space around you, you may be able to make a connection between your feelings and the architecture.

Think about one of your favorite buildings or spaces. What is it about that building or space that you like? Is it old or new? Is it simple or does it have a lot of decoration? See the variety in your own town or neighborhood and think about the values shown in the design of your house, school, and other buildings you may visit. Do these buildings blend in or stand out from their surroundings?

## EDUCATION AND TRAINING

To become an architect, it is necessary to go to college and receive a professional degree in architecture. Depending on the program, this will take five to seven years. Contact the schools you are interested in to find out about their entrance requirements. At architecture school, you will be exposed to interesting ideas and learn to express and explore these ideas through drawing, model-building and three-dimensional computer modeling. Different schools have different emphases, so make sure to research and find ones that match your interests.

Even after your college work is completed, you will not be able to call yourself an "architect" until you pass a licensing exam. Typically, you will first work for an architecture firm as an "intern" for at least three years. Once your internship is completed, you can take the exam. Most states require licensed architects to take continuing education classes to maintain their license and improve their knowledge and skills. The American Institute of Architects, a professional organization for architects, provides its members with educational seminars and other important resources.

## CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

The professional degree in architecture allows the graduate to pursue many different paths. Graduates may choose a traditional career as an architect or may decide to focus on only part of the process, such as building design, interior architecture, or construction technology. It is also possible to focus on only one building type, such as hospitals, schools, or houses. Others choose a related career as a project manager, building manager, building-products salespeople, or furniture designer. Those that like research and teaching may become professors.

## ASK AN ARCHITECT

If you are thinking of becoming an architect, it is never too early to visit an architect in your area to learn more about the profession. Architects often talk about the excitement of seeing their ideas and drawings become a building. They talk a lot about the satisfaction of finding creative solutions that meet the owner's needs. This satisfaction comes from the knowledge that many people will enjoy living, working or playing in the building they design. Their work is hard and they must continue to learn all the time, but they will tell you it's all worth the effort. To find a Minnesota architect, please call AIA Minnesota or visit us on the web at [www.aia-mn.org](http://www.aia-mn.org).

This brochure was created by the AIA Minnesota Architecture in the Schools Committee and is intended as a guide for students interested in a career in architecture. AIA Minnesota is a society of the American Institute of Architects and an advocate for the value of the architecture profession. To find a Minnesota architect please visit us on the web at [www.aia-mn.org](http://www.aia-mn.org).

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