



Architecturally Designed Homes and You

If you need the knowledge and judgement of an architect for your home project, this brochure will help you.

architecture

Architects want to create the design for your new living space that meets your space needs, your budget and your sense of pride in ownership. The process begins with a self-assessment of what you want and need (see next page) and how to find the architect that's right for you. Working together you'll develop a design for your project that can be enjoyed for years to come.

Architects are licensed by state governments to protect the health, safety and welfare of the public. They're trained to solve problems and to give shape and form to the space you need.

The architect's services are an investment, not an added cost, because their designs can capture energy savings, can improve the efficiency and productivity of your operations, and can add market value to your property because good design sells.

Think through carefully what your project requirements are. If you don't know about the entire design process, contact AIA Minnesota at 612-338-6763 or reference aia-mn.org. We have extensive resources to aid in your selection of an architect including a very descriptive directory of architectural firms. And we can explain in detail what architects do, how they are paid, and why they are needed.

Creation of your new home, or renovation of an older one, is an inherently exciting process. The secret to its success lies in the relationship you and your architect establish with one another. Minnesota's architects and firms are waiting to work with you.

20 Questions to Ask Before Getting Started

1. Where do we live now?
What do we like about it?
What's missing?
What don't we like?
2. Do we want to change or add to the space we have?
3. Do we want to build a new house?
4. Why do we want to build a new house or add to or renovate our current home?
Do we need more room?
Is our life-style changing?
Are children grown and moving?
Are parents or children returning to live with us?
5. What is our life-style?
Are we at home a great deal?
Do we work at home?
Do we entertain often?
How much time do we spend in living areas, bedrooms, kitchen, den or office, utility space, etc.?
6. How much time and energy are we willing to invest to maintain our home?
7. If we're thinking of adding on, what functions/activities will be housed in the new space?
8. What kind of spaces do we need, e.g., bedrooms, expanded kitchen, bathrooms, etc.?
9. How many of these spaces do we think we need?
10. What do we think the addition/renovation/new home should look like?
11. How much disruption can we tolerate to add on to or renovate our home?
12. How soon would we like to be settled into our new home or addition? Are there rigid time constraints?
13. If planning on a new home, what do we envision in this home that we don't have now?
14. If we're contemplating building a home, do we have a site selected?
15. Do we have strong ideas about design styles? What are our design preferences?
16. Who will be the primary contact with the architect, contractor, and others involved in designing and building our project? (It is good to have one point of contact to prevent confusion and mixed messages)
17. What qualities are we looking for in an architect?
A specific style?
Extensive remodeling experience?
A fresh outlook?
18. How much time do we have to be involved in the design and construction process?
19. Do we plan to do any of the work ourselves?
20. Whether an addition or a new home, how much can we realistically afford to spend?

Once these questions have been answered, you'll be better able to talk with an architect. The more detailed information you can give, the easier it will be for the architect to address your needs.



20 Questions to Ask Your Minnesota Architect

1. What does the architect see as important issues or considerations in our project? What are the challenges of the project?
2. How will the architect approach our project? What process will be used?
3. How will the architect gather information about our needs, goals, etc.?
4. How will the architect establish priorities and make decisions?
5. Who from the architecture firm will we be dealing with directly? Is that the same person who will be designing the project? Who will be designing our project?
6. Is the architect truly interested in this project?
7. How busy is the architect? Can our project comfortably fit in with other office projects?
8. What sets this architect apart from the rest? Will there be effective communications? Is there good “chemistry?”
9. How does the architect establish fees?
10. What would the architect expect the fee to be for this project?
11. What are the steps in the design process?
12. How does the architect organize the process?
13. What does the architect expect us to provide?
14. What is the architect’s design philosophy?
15. What is the architect’s experience/ track record with cost estimating?
16. What will the architect show us along the way to explain the project? Will we see sketches, drawings, or models?
17. If the scope of the project changes later in the project, will there be additional fees? How will these fees be justified?
18. What services does the architect provide during construction?
19. How disruptive will construction be? How long is it expected to take to complete our project?
20. Does the architect have a list of past clients that the firm has worked with?

The Design and Construction Process—What to Expect

Design and construction projects involve several steps. Typically, projects go through the following six phases. However, on some projects several of these steps may be combined or there may be additional ones.

Step 1 Programming/Deciding What to Build

The homeowner and architect discuss the requirements for the project (how many rooms, the function of the spaces, etc.), testing the fit between the owner's needs, wants, and budget.

Step 2 Schematic Design/Rough Sketches

The architect prepares a series of rough sketches, known as schematic designs, which show the general arrangement of rooms and of the building on the site. Some architects also prepare models or computer images to help visualize the project. The homeowner approves these sketches before proceeding to the next phase.

Step 3 Design Development/Refining the Design

The architect prepares more detailed drawings to illustrate other aspects of the proposed design. Floor plans show all the rooms in correct size and shape. Outline specifications are prepared listing the major materials and room finishes.

Step 4 Preparation of Construction Documents

Once the homeowner has approved the design, the architect prepares detailed drawings and specifications, which the contractor will use to establish actual construction cost and build the project. These drawings and specifications become part of the building contract.

Step 5 Hiring the Contractor

The homeowner selects and hires the contractor. The architect may assist in making some recommendations. The architects will prepare bidding documents as well as invitations to bid and instructions to bidders.

Step 6 Construction Administration

While the contractor will physically build the home or addition, the architect can assist the homeowner in making sure that the project is built according to the plans and specifications. The architect can make site visits to observe construction, review and approve the contractor's application for payment, and generally keep the homeowner informed of the project's progress. The contractor is solely responsible for construction methods, techniques, schedules, and procedures.

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