



AN ARCHITECT CAN HELP



**A SOCIETY OF THE
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WHY HIRE AN ARCHITECT?

To ensure that your building project is successful, consult an architect *before you build*.

Whether you are building a new home or an commercial development, planning some renovations, or adding to an existing structure – an architect brings value to your project by taking care of your interests and ensuring a quality building product. Architects are trained to consider every aspect of a project from design right through to construction, providing valuable services from start to finish.

Think of an architect as your personal consultant, helping you to conceive and to define the scope and nature of your project. Your architect will design, in close consultation with you, the most appealing and practical building, customizing it to your individual needs and working with you to ensure that it will serve you well into the future. An architect should be the first investment you make in your future project.

By examining the steps that you and your architect take as you build your dream home, or create the perfect locale for your business, or develop your property to its maximum market potential – the advantages of hiring an architect become clear.

While design skills of architects are well recognized, architects are also trained in the technical aspects of building. Architects are experts in site analysis, building codes and in the handling of complex matters relating to documentation, contracts and municipal approvals. They design for considerations of health and fire safety, space planning, and create lively interiors. An architect can assist you before the project is well defined. They can assess the potential of a site, the value of existing structures, the feasibility of renovations and additions and the proper image for your business. An architect can also assist you in the minutest details of you project such as designing the furniture.

And if you are looking for practical solutions that are within your budget, architects work towards giving you the best value for your money. They are highly pragmatic business people and their concepts and designs are tailored to your practical needs. Architects are trained to develop creative and appropriate design solutions within budget. They are trained to ensure design effectiveness – in other words the right design solution to give your project value for its construction budget.

Architects coordinate the professional engineering and the other specialized consultants that may be required to

complete your project. They ensure that all technical requirements of your project are integral to the design solution.

Architects act on your behalf throughout the construction process. Your Architect will make periodic visits to the site to review the progress and quality of the contractor's work and will report directly to you. Through this process of field review you can count on a quality-finished project, one that satisfies your needs and has lasting value.

An architect's services continue after the plans have been developed. By the time you begin construction, a large amount of time and effort has been invested to develop the best possible building design. Continuing the architect's full services on a project through to completion protects you investment. You can rely on your architect's expertise to give direction and handle the unexpected during the construction phase. While the municipal building inspector and the contractor each have important jobs to do, the architect is responsible to you and prepared to act in your best interest.

Architects provide value for their fees. When you look at the entire project budget, an architect's fee represents only a small part of the overall cost and yet by developing an effective design which matches your needs, and by monitoring the quality and care in its execution, the architect enhances the value you receive from your expenditure.

Working with an architect is also rewarding. You will find yourself actively involved in a process that's about you, your lifestyle or the nature of the business. The end result is a building created with professional skill and ability.

No matter what the size of project you are considering, there exists the right architect for your project. Virtually every architectural firm handles a wide range of projects from home renovations to shopping malls and other commercial developments. For many architects, designing a smaller commission can be just as challenging and rewarding as participating in a larger project.

The question you should be asking yourself isn't whether or not to hire an architect – but which architect should you hire.

HOW TO CHOOSE AN ARCHITECT:

Your first step is to find an architect whose work you admire and with whom you can develop a good rapport. Ask friends and business associates who have worked with an architect and get their opinion; take note of projects you admire and ask for the name of the architect involved; or contact the Ontario Association of Architects which has graphic information sheets of many firms, called *Practice Profiles*, on file at 111 Moatfield Drive, Don Mills, Ontario.

When you have identified a choice of firms, possibly two or three, arrange a personal meeting with each of them. This meeting is important. You will be working with the architect for a long time. Building or renovating can be a difficult and frustrating experience and an empathy between you and your architect is essential. This initial meeting can take place either in the architect's office, or at your home or office and should last about an hour. Many firms do not charge for this meeting, but some do. Ask in advance if there will be a fee. During the meeting, ask to see examples of the firm's work and question each firm on how they would approach your project. Find out how busy the firm is. Make sure you meet with the person who will be handling your project. It is quite acceptable to ask an architect for references from past clients and to ask for addresses so you can go and look at projects the firm has completed. While you will certainly not wish to select an architect solely based on fees, talk about your budget and find out the range of fees and services that the architect will provide for your project.

In the final analysis, you will choose the architect whose work you admire, whose expertise you trust, and with whom you feel most comfortable.

AGREEMENTS:

Your architect will use all the information from your first meeting to prepare an agreement outlining the services to be provided, a work schedule, and the fees involved.

There are recommended fees for certain building types and you can obtain an Outline of Services and Schedule of Recommended Fees from the Ontario Association of Architects. The architect may be paid in stages. Payments begin with a retainer and then follow after schematic design, design development, completion of construction documents, and on through construction. Payments are in increments base on work completed until the full fee has been paid.

The agreement between you and your architect is usually in the form of a standard contract or may be in the form of a letter of agreement, which will require your acknowledgement. A standard client agreement can eliminate any disputes with respect to fees and services. Assuming that your architect's proposal meets with your approval, you will be asked to sign and return one copy of the agreement. At this point work will officially begin on your project.



THE PROJECT BEGINS

THE SCOPE OF THE WORK:

Once you have selected your architect, establish a basic understanding in key areas. Be prepared to discuss the nature and scope of your project in infinite detail; its size; your hopes, expectations and objectives. This is an existing undertaking and it can be most rewarding when you and your architect work as a team. Be prepared to explore new ideas. Your architect will ask questions and listen closely. You should also listen to your architect. Based on his or her experience, your architect may suggest ideas and solutions you had never thought of.

Your architect will continue asking questions to gain a clear understanding of your thoughts, wishes, and goals. You may be asked to supply certain technical information, such as surveys and soils information for your building site, or data on your existing building.

After considering all the factors, an architect organizes the elements of your project, explores the design options and develops the best solutions for you to consider.

PRELIMINARY SKETCHES:

Design is a dynamic three-phase process. During the 'schematic design' stage your architect will begin by preparing preliminary design sketches to explore and illustrate possible options.

The architect reviews this schematic design with you, pointing out the merits, and receiving your reaction. The sketches will

be revised after discussion. This is the time at which changes should be made until you reach agreement on the design approach, which works best in terms of site planning, function, quality, cost, and appearance.

DESIGN DEVELOPMENT:

The 'design development' stage refines the agreed upon schematic design for a clearer definition of the scope and quality of the finished project. Further cost projections will determine how closely the design conforms to budget expectations.

CONSTRUCTION DOCUMENTS:

When the design concepts have been decided, the architect prepares working drawings and specifications. These are required to obtain building permits and bids, and to instruct the contractor.

SELECTING A CONTRACTOR:

In the final stages of your project, your architect will help you in two important ways. He or she can advise you on your choice of a contractor; this is usually done by calling for competitive bids. When the choice is made, you and the contractor will sign a contract. Then your architect will consult with you and advise you during construction. On-site visits will determine if construction is proceeding in general accordance with the contract, and that design, materials and workmanship meet with the specifications prepared and with acceptable standards. Your architect provides regular progress reports to keep you informed, authorizes staged payments to contractors and remains involved until the project is completed.