



HOW TO HIRE THE RIGHT ARCHITECT

FOR YOUR HIGH END
NEW YORK CITY APARTMENT

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studio

HOW DO I FIND THE
RIGHT ARCHITECT FOR
MY PROJECT?

WHAT CAN AN
ARCHITECT DO FOR
ME?

DO I REALLY NEED TO
HIRE AN ARCHITECT?

HOW MUCH ARE
ARCHITECTS' FEES?

This guide is dedicated to countless people who struggle to understand the design and construction process. People often wonder, “How do I find the right Architect for my Project?” “What can an Architect do for me and how much are their fees?” And most importantly, “What are the key steps I need to take to ensure that I hire the Architect who will be the perfect match for my project and me?”

This process may feel like a complex and frightening challenge for those who haven't been through it before. We aim to provide clear guidelines for how to take some first steps in the process and also how to follow through to successful fruition of your ideas. The first and most important step is to find and hire your Architect. Working with an Architect from the very beginning will add the greatest value to your investment and ensure a successful project. Following these points will guide you along the way to finding the perfect match for you. Use these to help you analyze the qualifications, design strengths and communication skills of your candidates. Your goal is to find the right Architect for your project, your budget and you. I hope you enjoy this guide and look forward to your feedback on the contents.

1 Search for an Architect

Like many other fields, word of mouth is the best way to look for an Architect. Ask family, friends and professional colleagues for referrals. Is there a particular home you admire? A knock on the door can yield an introduction to your project's potential Architect. Professional organizations such as your city or country's local Architectural institutions are also great sources. General contractors, interior design studios and other trade-related personnel would also be able to furnish some referrals.

Be sure to visit web sites of your candidates. Look at their previous work. Get a feel for what is their design style and language – is it about blending in the neighborhood, is it environmentally sound designs or is it about making a big statement? Then, start a conversation. Make an appointment for a consultation. Meeting face to face will help you decide if it is a fit.

DOES THEIR WORK INSPIRE YOU?

2 Review samples of their work

How will the Architect approach your project? Let them know the most important aspects of your project and ask how they will be incorporated into a process. If you are doing 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.

Visit the Websites of your candidates. Look at their previous projects. Does their work inspire you? Would you be thrilled to live/work in one of the spaces they designed? Spend some time thinking about what kind of Architecture you love and find examples. Having examples facilitates discussions and the creative process with your Architect. Online Design Magazine sites like Interior Design Magazine, Dwell, or Design Boom are great for collecting images. Beware of hiring an Architect with a Traditional style if you want to build a modern/contemporary space.

3 Do your Homework

Once you have found a few candidates whose work you like, email or call and start a conversation. But before you call gather your thoughts and key information about your project.

Here is a list of things you should know before you call:

- Square Footage: How much space do you want to build or renovate?
- Budget: How much money is available for this project?
- Price Point: Is this a budget project (\$200/sf) or a luxury project (\$700/sf)?
- Time Frame: When do you want or need the project completed?

GATHER YOUR THOUGHTS AND KEY INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR PROJECT.

4 Understand the Architect's Design Process

How will the Architect approach your project? Do they have a the process that is clear and logical? Ask them to walk you through it and ask questions about anything you don't understand. If you are designing a new home, ask them about their experience with zoning and regulatory issues in your area. Ask how they incorporate environmentally friendly, sustainable "green" designs into their work. Make sure their design process and approach is right for you and your project.

5 Meet your Architect

Make an appointment to meet your potential Architect ideally at the site. You are entering into an important relationship and a face-to-face or video conference meeting will help you decide if you will have a productive rapport with your Architect.

Signing a contract with an Architect representing an Architectural firm does not necessarily mean that person will be your Project Architect. Be sure to meet the person in charge of your Project before making any final decisions. Being able to communicate freely and openly with your project Architect/ Designer is vital to the success of your project. You may work with the Principal only when working with a small firm.

DOES THE ARCHITECT HAVE A PROCESS THAT IS CLEAR AND LOGICAL?

6 The Full Service Firm

Conceptual renderings and blueprints are not the only services Architectural and Planning firms provide. Ask about other services your candidate's firm offers. Basic Services are defined by the AIA (American Institute of Architects) Knowledge Resource, and are commonly included in any Architect's/Designer's proposal. However, before Basic Services begin you should commission an Architect/Designer to help you formulate a clear project brief. This phase is called Pre Design, Feasibility Study or Needs Analysis. This is the first and most important step. It is the foundation upon which the rest of the project is built.

An Architect/Designer will guide you through a Needs Analysis to determine your goals and priorities, the constraints and opportunities of your site and the feasibility of your timeline and budget.

*Avoid rushing right into Schematic Design without completing this phase, as this can be very costly down the line.

Basic Services include the following phases:

- Schematic Design: Establish the conceptual design, scale and relationship among spaces.
- Design Development: Refine the design and prepare plans, elevations, building sections and typical details.
- Contract Documents: Prepare detailed working drawings and specifications for construction.
- Bidding and Negotiation: Solicit bids from contractors and negotiate the contract for construction.
- Contract Administration: Observe construction to assure the project is built according to the drawings and specifications

1. American Institute of Architects, AIA Knowledge Resources Staff, BP 15.01.01, "Defining the Architect's Basic Services," July 2007.

BEING ABLE TO
COMMUNICATE FREELY
AND OPENLY IS VITAL
TO THE SUCCESS OF
YOUR PROJECT.

Additional Services:

- Project Feasibility Study
- Programming
- Master Planning
- Entitlements
- Evaluation Of Potential Building
- Computer Renderings
- Leed ® Coordination And Certification Assistance
- Detailed Cost Estimates
- Furniture, Furnishings & Equipment Specifications
- Construction Observation and Payment Verification

7 3D Modeling: Don't Build Without It

Architects understand how two-dimensional elevations and floor plans translate into actual buildings but clients may have difficulty visualizing the end result. Because of this, the use of digital modeling is very common today and is a powerful tool for designing and visualizing spaces from both the inside and outside of a structure. There is a variety of modeling software that allows the Architect to virtually illustrate the project before work begins, allowing the client to visualize every space. Digital modeling takes much of the fear and risk out of the design and construction process.

AN ARCHITECT WILL GUIDE YOU THROUGH A NEED ANALYSIS TO DETERMINE YOUR GOALS AND PRIORITIES.

8 Figuring Out the Fees

For New Construction, an Architect's fee is calculated as a percentage of the Project's final cost of construction. These fees range from 10 to 25 percent for residential projects. However, when you first start the design process, it is difficult, if not impossible to accurately determine the final construction cost. During this initial time period (before the final project cost is determined) the Architect may charge an hourly fee.

For a Renovation, the Architect fee is calculated hourly with a ballpark idea of the time frame needed for a specific scope of work. An Architect will also ask for an up-front retainer to begin work.

Billing monthly is the industry standard. Also ask when payment is expected and what's included in the fees. Keep in mind that the Architect's fee applies to all the costs of your project. Expect that the cost of expert consultants like engineers or lighting designers who may be part of the design team will also be included in the architect's fee. The most important thing about fees is complete transparency, insist upon it.

9 Hiring a Contractor

Typically the owner hires the Contractor but your Architect should be able to help you choose the best contractor for your project. An experienced Architect has a list of contractors they have worked with and would recommend. Hiring a Contractor for pre-construction services during the design phase is helpful for getting detailed cost estimates along the way to ensure your design ideas won't add up to more than you can afford. Remember when hiring a contractor to always get multiple bids on the construction of your project – even if you already have a contractor in mind.

It is recommended that your Architect assist you in Contractor selection to ensure that there is good communication between the two parties knowing that a solid and clear rapport is necessary for the success of your Project. These tips will guide you in choosing the best Professional for your project. You will be working very closely with your Architect on what may be one of the biggest investments of your life. While the creative process is exciting, it can get intimidating at times and choosing the right team can make it a very enjoyable process. We hope these tips will help you choose well when undertaking that big project you are considering.

YOU NOW HAVE
THE CRITICAL
INFORMATION YOU'LL
NEED TO HELP YOU
HIRE THE ARCHITECT
THAT WILL ENSURE
THAT YOUR PROJECT
IS A SUCCESS.

The Next Step

Congratulations! You now have the key information that will help you lay a successful foundation for understanding how to find and hire an Architect.

Unfortunately, it is difficult to include every important piece of information about this most important step in the design and construction process successfully in this guide. It would be impossible because each project is unique and the requirements differ based on a multitude of factors. But with the steps explained in this guide, you have the critical information to help you hire the Architect that will ensure that your project is a success.

If you are in the process of looking for an Architect for your project, let's talk. I can help you wade through the necessary requirements and make sure you aren't overlooking a crucial factor that could doom your project to failure. I offer a custom need and options consultation where I will identify the specific requirements pertaining to your project and your available options. Typically, the need and options review saves my clients thousands of dollars and weeks of lost time, not to mention the stress and headache of getting something wrong.

To read more about the needs and options consultation as well as the price for this service and why it is critically important for your project's success visit our website at www.orastudionyc.com

If you are ready to talk now, please give me a call at **212 448 95 18** or email me at info@orastudionyc.com

Best wishes for the success of your project!



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