

WHO NEEDS AN ARCHITECT AND WHAT DO THEY DO?

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Architects are often approached by business and homeowners who want to know how much it will cost to “draw a set of plans.” Perhaps the first thing they need to know is that, if it is a single family or duplex residence, an architect’s services are not required by law. Residential drafting companies provide similar services that are often more economical. The difference is usually in the design creativity. Some drafting businesses provide the necessary computer drawings, but, unlike an architect, expect the owner to solve the design problems.

Typically, for residential projects, an architect will meet with the client, discuss their lifestyle needs and style preferences, and provide the homeowner with a set of design that are creative and aesthetically pleasing.

For approximately one to two percent of the total project cost, you can receive architectural services for your residential project. If you are going to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars on a new home or remodel of your existing one, it simply makes sense to hire an architect to ensure your home has both curb appeal and a good interior design.

According to state law and local building codes, all three-plex and larger residential buildings and all public buildings require an architect. The project scope can range from a new building, an addition, or a remodeling project as minor as moving one wall. The minimum architectural services that are required by law to be provided are the preparation of plans and specifications “that clearly show the project in its entirety with emphasis on the scope of work, building code compliance, structural integrity, life safety assurance, architectural barriers, and environmental barriers.” The level of completeness the architect determines is very interpretive. Select an architect that you know will deliver a complete set of bidding/construction documents. Selecting an architect because they are the cheapest can get you an incomplete set of drawings that can cost you much more in construction problems and time delays. Also, the architect must “record all changes throughout the project and provide revised plans, calculations, or other appropriate documents” to the code enforcement official.

Once the owner and architect determine the project scope and details, the architect can prepare an accurate proposal of services. Architectural services that can be provided include:

- Assisting the owner in site selection for a new facility
- Surveying existing building conditions for renovation and building addition projects
- Feasibility study - a detailed project needs report
- Space utilization study - a detailed room by room analysis of building functions
- Accessibility study - a survey of an existing facility to indicate barriers in the building preventing access of persons with disabilities in accord with the Illinois Accessibility Code and Americans with Disabilities Act
- Conceptual design drawings
- Three-dimensional renderings or models
- Bidding/construction drawings - Provide drawings which represent the complete design of the project in accord with the State and Local Building Codes for use in receiving building permits, to distribute to contractors for competitive bids and, later, as building plans
- Specifications - a project manual specifying materials and installation requirements provided as a companion to the bidding/construction drawings
- Cost estimates -guidelines for staying on budget provided after contractor bids received
- Provide bidding administration services including preparation of an owner/contractor agreement.
- Construction Observation – monitor contractor’s progress in completing work in accord with the bidding/construction documents.

If you are in need of an architect to provide some of the services previously described, take the time to select an architect that you feel:

- you can easily communicate with
- who will respond to you in a timely manner
- will provide an accurate set of plans

Whether you are building new, adding on, or remodeling, make sure you have selected an architect that will make your project a positive experience.