

Carl Colson - Architect



HOW TO HIRE AN ARCHITECT



Welcome.

After seeing so many people struggle with understanding the design and construction process, I thought I would put together some guidelines and tips that can help when selecting an architect for your project. This process can seem

like a complex and frightening roadblock for those who haven't been through it before. The first and most important step is to find and hire your architect.

You may be wondering: how do I find the right architect for my project? Do I really need to hire an architect? How much are architects fees? What about contractors? And most importantly: what are the key, critical steps I need to take to ensure that I hire the architect that is the perfect match for my project?

In the following pages, you will discover the answers to these questions – and more.

I hope you enjoy this guide and look forward to your feedback on the contents.

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www.CarlColsonArchitect.com
Carl@CarlColsonArchitect.com 425-806-3703

Nothing is more exciting than creating a new building whether it's your new home or a multifamily project and nothing will affect the success of your project more than the right architect. The architect determines the design and function of a building based on your needs and goals that you have established for your project. Finding an architect that is well suited for your project is not impossible and the following ten points can guide you along the way. Use these to help analyze the personality, design strategy and communication skills of your candidates. Your goal is to find the right architect for you and your project.

1. Finding 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. General contractors, developers, 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.

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2. The Architects approach and design process

How will the architect approach your project? Do you feel that they are listening to your needs or are they steering you in directions that they prefer? 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.

3. Design Style: What style do you prefer?

It is common for an architect to be known by a certain design style, whether their work is traditional or more contemporary. Skilled and creative architects can work in a number of different styles. Begin collecting plenty of examples of the look you want; these can be found from catalogs, magazines or the Internet and show these to the architect you are considering hiring. Helping the architect to be aware of your preferences can be a help to the architect, as well as your design budget in that the architect doesn't have to spend time pursuing styles or ideas that you may not prefer. Environmentally friendly, sustainable "green" designs and construction can be applied to any style. Discuss the importance of these elements with your architect from the outset.

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4. Large Architectural Firm or Small Architectural Firm

If you may be considering an architectural firm that has numerous employees, be aware that signing a contract with an architect representing an architectural firm does not necessarily mean that person will be your project architect. Actually, outside of single-architect owned businesses, this is common procedure. Be sure to meet the project architect before making any final decisions. Being able to communicate freely and openly with your project architect is vital to the success of your project. You should share a clear understanding of the project with your architect and feel completely comfortable. Working with a sole proprietor architect certainly has its advantages as that architect is working on your project from start to finish and can stay focused on your project and your needs. The one-to-one relationship between you and a sole proprietor can be very beneficial in helping you to get the home design that you prefer.

5. 3-D modeling: Don't build your home without it

Architects understand how elevations and floor plans translate into actual buildings; their clients necessarily don't. A 3-D model is the best way to see how your new home will look when built. Software today allows design reviewing from multiple angles. Being able to work in 3-D helps clients get better involved in the design process and they enjoy the viewing experience and being able to visually understand the building and spaces from many different viewpoints.

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6. The full-service architectural firm

Conceptual renderings and blueprints are not the only services architectural and planning firms provide. Ask about other services your candidate's firm offers. Ask about benefits of specific services to you and their corresponding costs. Ask your architect if there are any additional services offered and how they could be useful to you for your particular project. If a firm doesn't offer a requested service, they should be able to refer a firm that does.

Below is a glimpse into some additional services a typical architectural firm provides:

- Project Feasibility Studies
- Programming
- Master Planning
- Entitlements
- Evaluation Of Potential Building Sites
- Architectural Design
- Computer 3-D Visualization Drawings
- Comprehensive Construction Documents
- Construction Administration

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7. Construction Drawings



The project that you're contemplating may be the first opportunity you've had to work with an architect. When interviewing architects, ask to see a set of their completed Construction Documents they have completed for a similar project. The final price that the client pays the contractor for constructing their project will depend in part on the thoroughness and completeness of the drawings that the architect has prepared. Incomplete drawing sets or sets that contain very little information are confusing to the contractor and since the set may not be complete, the contractor has to make assumptions on the architect's intentions. As a result, different contractors interpret the drawings differently and it's difficult for the client to get a fair price when comparing bids from different contractors. A set of thorough and properly prepared construction documents can save in two ways. First, it helps to eliminate costly change orders that come about from poorly prepared

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drawings. Second, it speeds up the approval process from the building department and reduces the need for numerous submittals to the building department in order to get the drawings approved for a building permit.

8. Figuring out the fees

Typically, an architect's fee is calculated as a percentage of the project's entire construction cost (minus the architect's fee of course). Depending on the services provided by the architect, the rate could range from 5 to 15 percent. However, when you first start the design process for your project, it is difficult, if not impossible to accurately determine the final project cost for the architects services. During this initial time period, the work will be completed on hourly fee basis until the schematic design is completed. Once the schematic design is completed, the architect can give a fixed price for completing the construction drawings. Billing monthly is the industry standard. Also, ask when payment is expected and the preferred method of payment, i.e. check, credit card, etc. Keep in mind that the architect's fee is only one of the consultant costs of your project. Examples of the consultant fees are civil and structural engineering professionals who also provide services for your project.

9. Hiring a Contractor

An experienced architect often has a list of contractors they like to work with. An architect may be able to help you find the best contractor for your project. Always get multiple bids on the construction of your project – even if you already have a

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contractor. This is an industry standard and gives you better leverage at the bargaining table. Additionally, having a contractor during the design process ensures you will not be building more than you can afford.

These tips are meant as a guide to choosing the best architect for your project. You will be working very closely with your architect as the construction cost of your project may be one of the larger investments of your life. Not only are an architect's answers to your questions important, but how they are answered speaks volumes, too. Did they take time for details to clear up any confusion? Did you feel comfortable with them? Did they conduct business in a transparent manner? The creative process is exciting but can get intimidating at times, however choosing the right team can make it an enjoyable process. That team always starts with choosing the right architect and we hope these tips will help you with that for your next project.

10. 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, I can't include every important piece of information about this most important step in the design and construction process successfully in this guide.

Actually, that would be impossible because each project is unique and the requirements differ based on a multitude of factors. But with the 10 steps explained in this guide, you have information to help you hire the architect that will ensure

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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 understand and comply with the necessary requirements and make sure you aren't overlooking a crucial factor that could affect your project in less than desirable ways. I have worked with my clients and have helped them determine the factors that might affect their projects, as well as ideas that can really enhance their project, while saving them money. They have been very pleased with my services and their word of mouth recommendations to their friends, neighbors, and colleagues have been one of the best referral sources for my future projects. I look forward to the opportunity to meet with you and discuss your project.



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