

## How To Hire An Architect: Fall/Winter=Design, Spring/Summer=Build

### Introduction:

Architects and Engineers are sometimes misunderstood. What do they provide? Who are they? What are their education and training requirements? We all know what a doctor provides. We know what an attorney does. Some professions are easily understood. And so, too, can the Architecture and Engineering professions.

An Architect is one that has education, training, experience, vision and the esthetics to help a client achieve the results they want. The Architect solves challenges in creative ways that can save you money. Many people balk at the fees that Architects charge, but keep in mind that these fees are a small percentage of the total costs one will spend on a project. You are going to spend a lot more on the land (if you don't already have it) and the construction. The Architect and the Design Team will design to meet your budget and to be as energy efficient as possible. This will save you money in your future costs of your structure. The following is a cursory summary of what Architects and their Design Teams do, when you need them and how to best utilize their services.

### Time To Design:

In the spring a lot of individuals, families and companies thoughts turn to building and that is as it should be. A lot of times, that is when their thoughts turn to designing as well. Unless one can find a Design Team that can punch out a Project immediately, the next Construction Season is the best they will do. It is best to start designing in the fall or winter to allow a Project to proceed through design, permitting and bidding (if necessary). Sometimes the owner knows who will build their project and sometimes it is put out for open bid or selected contractors bid.

### Design Team:

Now, when the snow is on the ground is when the thoughts of design should be hitting the drafting board, or should we say, computer screen in these times. The first task is to hire the Design Team to meet your Project needs. The team leader is the Architect and should be the first of the Design Team selected. The Architect usually has a Design Team in place that will meet the Project parameters or if not will obtain the proper Design Team for the Project.

### Residential, Commercial, Educational, Institutional:

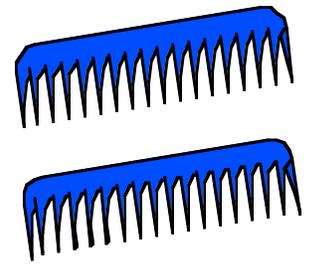
The Design Team includes: Architect, Interior Designer (if the client desires these services), Geotechnical Engineer (if no soils information is available), Surveyor (some jurisdictions require a recent as-built of the property), Structural Engineer (some jurisdictions require structural calculations, drawings and details), Mechanical Engineer (if desired for residential-sometimes a design-build solution works if the Project is simple, but is required for commercial, educational and institutional) and Electrical Engineer (same as Mechanical). These are the basic teams-additional consultants may be required according to Project needs. Kitchen designers, educational consultants (for school projects, of course), Preservation Architects for historical projects and other specialties.

### Architect Education Requirements:

When one hires an Architect one can be assured that the individual has a Bachelors of Architecture (BARCH for short) which is a five year degree (or four years if registered before the Architects, Engineers, and Land Surveyors Board (hereafter AELS) regulations were modified) or an equivalent amount of years of work and combined educational experience if approved by the AELS Board. Also, a Masters of Architecture will enable one to qualify to sit for the National Council of Architectural Registration Boards-NCARB exam. After graduation a three year period of internship is served under the direct supervision of a licensed Architect(s). During this three year period, the Intern Architect must complete the Intern Development program. This program ensures a broad overall experience in Architecture (not just designing stair details for three years!). Also, during this period the successful completion of the Architect, Engineers, and Land Surveyors Board (AELS) approved Arctic Engineering university level course. At the completion of the three year period, the intern Architect is allowed to take the National Council of Architectural Registration Boards Architectural National Exam. At the successful passing of the exam, the Intern Architect is allowed to be licensed by the State as a registered Architect.

### Engineers Land Surveyors, and Landscape Architects Education Requirements:

To find requirements for these professions one can find information in the Statutes and Regulations for Architects, Engineers and Land Surveyors available through the Alaska Department of Community and Economic Development, Division of Occupation Licensing. The phone number is 269-8160. They can also be reached online at <http://www.dced.state.ak.us/occ/>.



Combs & Combs, AIA  
Architecture, Interiors & Art  
7480 Upper O'Malley Road  
Anchorage, Alaska  
99507-6207  
Tel: 907-346-3990  
Fax: 907-346-3990, C\*  
Cell: 907-250-4207  
Email: [sam.combs@gci.net](mailto:sam.combs@gci.net)  
Web Site:  
<http://home.gci.net/~c-combs>

### **American Institute of Architects:**

Some may think that to be a registered Architect one must have the designation of AIA after the name. It is true that only a registered Architect may use the "AIA" designation, but a registered Architect does not have to have the AIA designation. Having AIA does mean that the Architect that you chose has to maintain a certain amount of continuing education hours each year to maintain membership in the AIA. That does help to ensure that your Architect is keeping up with new construction methodologies, materials, safety issues and code issues that assist in the completion of the design of a Project. An Architect who is a member of the AIA also subscribes to a professional code of ethics. Clients may check out the National AIA web sit at /<http://www.aia.org/index.htm>. There you will find information on Architects and listings of Architects in Alaska that have experience in the particular type of Project that you need assistance in designing. A "Beginner's Guide to Architectural Services" can be reviewed, downloaded or printed out from the web site as well. This document goes into further detail on how, when and what an Architect can provide to the client. Also, AIAAlaska has it's own site at <http://www.aiaak.org/> that contains information that will assist the potential client as well. An additional designation that you may see is FAIA which designates that the holder of that title has been recognized by the AIA as a Fellow and has met certain professional standards to receive this designation. Don't confuse the symbols AIBD for a registered professional. AIBD stands for the American Institute of Building Design which has no requirements for a professional architectural degree and/or registration with the State. Many draftspersons join this profession to simulate a professional background and confuse potential clients into thinking they are Architects-they are not. Also, "Associate Member of the American Institute of Architects" doesn't mean the individual is registered as an Architect, in fact, they're not.

### **National Council of Architectural Registration Boards (NCARB):**

In recent years architects that have qualified to use the designation "NCARB" may now do so. What this designates is that the Architect who may use the NCARB designation has met all the requirements of the NCARB for registration in other states (individual states may have their own requirements which the Architect must meet or they simply may grant reciprocity with an NCARB certificate) and has achieved the highest level of stature as a member of the NCARB.

### **State of Alaska Professional Architecture, Engineering, Land Surveying or Landscape Architecture Registration:**

Keep in mind that if the Architects, Engineers, Land Surveyors and Landscape Architects that are part of your Design Team are registered by the State of Alaska, they are required by law to ensure the public health, safety or welfare of their clients. Therefore, there is a liability that these professionals have to their clients as well as the public. Keep in mind that there are other individuals and firms that may offer design services that are not registered in the state for services they are providing. Clients take on a certain liability themselves in not utilizing registered professionals. The client does not have the assurance of knowing that the Design Team they chose has met the educational and professional requirements of the State of Alaska if they do not hire a registered design team. You may need to hire the registered professionals at a later time when the level of education and experience become evident in a non-registered Design Team and corrections are needed to meet code and regulatory requirements.

### **State of Alaska Professional Architecture, Engineering, Land Surveying or Landscape Architecture Requirements:**

The State of Alaska requires that all residential projects for "a building that is intended to be used only as a residence by not more than four families and that is not more than two stories high" may be designed by unregistered individuals. Any commercial "alteration or repairs to a building that do not change or affect the structural system or the safety of the building or do not affect the public health, safety, or welfare" may also be designed by unregistered individuals. That is the choice of the client, but consultation with a registered professional is a good idea to alleviate any unforeseen problems. The Architect can provide the client with a code analysis that will set the parameters of the Project and may indicate that a registered professional (or professionals) is not only advisable, but required by State or Municipal or Borough regulations. All new commercial, educational and institutional structures (and residential structures that house more than four families) are required to be designed by registered professionals because they do affect the public health, safety, or welfare.

### **Preparation:**

I always suggest to clients and potential clients to do their homework-keep a notebook of ideas. You will be perusing magazines, books, the net for ideas. Keeps those ideas in a notebook that you can share with your Architect. This keeps your ideas organized and lets your Design Team know what your initial ideas are and lets the Project proceed more quickly and effectively.

### **The Process:**

There are several phases of any Project and they can be roughly categorized as follows: Phase 1: Pre-Project: This is when the site is visited, Scope of the Work is established, fees are obtained from consultants, a complete fee proposal is presented to the client and the contract for design is negotiated.; Phase 2: Pre-Design: A preliminary meeting with the design team and the owner can occur to get

the project off on the right track. Other Pre-Design duties include site photos, utility research, preliminary code analysis, etc.; Phase 3: Schematics: This is when the pedal gets put to the metal and spaces begin to take shape per the owners requirements.; Phase 4: Design Development: Further refinement of the design begins to take place in the form of more complete floor plans, elevations, sections, wall sections, details and finishes; Phase 5: Construction Documents: These are the documents that go to the relevant regulatory authorities for approval, also the documents go to Contractors if the project is going out for bid.; Phase 6: Bid &/Or Negotiation: This is when the project is going through the bid process or is being reviewed by a selected contractor for a bid.; Phase 7: Pre-Construction: Meetings occur with the client, necessary members of the design team and the selected contractor, the Owner-Contractor Contract is prepared either with the Architect's assistance or if the owner has their own preferred contract, that can be utilized as well.; Phase 8: Construction Administration: The structure is being built, the architect and relevant members of the design team can perform timely inspections to ensure the project is being built as designed, approve pay requests from the Contractor and assist in any changes in the design that may be or desired to be implemented.; Phase 9: Construction Closeout: The project is complete and to ensure that all is constructed as planned and promised, the architect will perform a final inspection and provide a punch list of any items that need to be fixed or completed.; Phase 10: Warranty Inspection: This inspection can occur nine months or a year down the road after the project is completed to ensure that all is performing as anticipated and if not, rectification by the Contractor when relevant can be directed.; and Phase 11: Supplemental Services: Periodic inspections or services by the Architect and/or Design Team can occur when requested by the Owner. The Project may require some or all of these phases-that will be delineated by the Design Team at the beginning of the Project.

### **The Contract:**

The AIA provides basic form documents that can be modified to meet the particular requirements of the Project. These documents may be utilized or the Architect and sometimes the Owner will have their own Contract document. The Architect will provide the potential client with an estimate of fees that will delineate their own fees and expenses as well as those of the Consultants. The Architect will contract with the consultants separately, so the client will only have one contract with the Design Team through the Architect. Do get your agreement in writing-it helps to protect all parties.

Fees may be confusing for first-time Architectural clients. There is no definitive way to establish fees. Some Architects use an hourly rate based on perceived scope of work, some on estimated construction costs, some on anticipated square footage and sometimes a combination of these methods. Feel free to discuss the process with your Architect. Remember if you change your Project during the course of the Contract, you change the fees when you change the scope of the work. Amendments to the Contract will take into account changes to the Scope of the Work. If you ask your Dentist to do an additional filling or crown while in the middle of a procedure, you would expect to pay for it. If you add a room, a floor level or other features you must realize that it will take additional work for the Design Team to produce the results.

### **References:**

Whomever one uses for a Project, the request of at least three references and review of what the Architect and/or Design Team has accomplished will allow a informed review of the potential Design Team.

### **Chemistry:**

When you have narrowed your list of Architects and their teams down to a few that have the experience necessary for your Project, the final decision may be based on chemistry. How you relate to the Architect is a big portion of your decision. Spend a little time getting to know your Architect. And vice versa, the Architect should spend a little time getting to know the client. Remember, you need to feel comfortable with your Architect. You are going to be spending a substantial amount of time with each other and the experience should be a good, if not great one. Remember that you and your Design Team are exactly that-a team. You are working together towards the successful completion of the project.

### **Conclusion:**

A Design Project should be a process that is enjoyable and will result in a Project that the client and the users of the structure will enjoy and benefit from a well thought out design solution. Sometimes it may be a challenge to get through certain phases of a Project, but if there is an understanding and clear lines of communication between the design team and the client, the results can be great.