WORKING WITH AN ARCHITECT FOR YOUR HOME

Australian Institute of Architects

Front Cover:
Cantala Avenue House
ME Architecture
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Whether building a new home or developing a commercial space, working with an architect gives you the best chance of achieving your vision. Finding the right architect that suits you and your project is the key to success.

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WHAT AN ARCHITECT CAN BRING TO YOUR PROJECT

An architect can help you realise your ambitions and guide you through the design and construction process. Architects provide a service that extends well beyond producing a set of drawings – they can handle the paperwork, bring value for money, imagination and peace of mind to your project, and keep it on track and on budget.

Value for money

Architects are professional problem solvers and lateral thinkers. Homes designed by architects have been found to command higher resale values. Architects' experience and insight can help stretch what can be achieved within your budget and add value to your project. They can suggest new ways of utilising space and light, enrich the palette of materials and finishes and fittings, find an appropriate builder at the right price, and propose design solutions that will reduce your overall running costs while maximising the energy efficiency of your home. At a fraction of the cost of your project, an architect's fees will prove a sound investment.

Imagination

An architect can lift your project out of the ordinary and help you achieve your aspirations and vision. They are trained designers who will explore your needs and desires, and find inventive and practical ways of enhancing your living environment.

Peace of mind

When you hire an architect, you have a professional on your side who knows the construction industry inside out. You are working with someone who has undertaken seven years of architectural training – no other building professional is trained in design and construction to such a high level of expertise. The use of the title 'architect' is protected by law. Only people or firms registered with the Architects Registration Board in each state or territory may use the title.

WHAT AN ARCHITECT CAN DO FOR YOU

An architect will provide you with much more than just drawings, they have the experience to see your project successfully through to completion. They can oversee the design, assist with the approvals process, manage the build and keep track of your budget.

Concept design

Consulting an architect at the pre-design stage will allow them to get a real feel for your needs so that together a clear brief can be established with a realistic budget. This will help reduce the overall design costs and help ensure the project comes in on time and on budget while identifying and reducing any potential problems early on.

Design development

Your architect will work closely with you to develop the concept in order to maximise your investment, ensure your project is cost effective and help add real value to your home.

Town planning & development application

Your architect can help with the town planning and development application approvals (where required) before your project can go ahead, including preparation of applications to the local council. Your architect can guide you through these matters as they develop the design. They will also be able to assist you in making the necessary submission for approvals and handle negotiations with the statutory bodies.

Construction documentation

The drawings and specifications will be prepared by your architect, and they will oversee the documentation by other specialist consultants. They will also lead you through matters in regards to the building permit.

Contractor selection

You will be guided through the contractor selection by your architect who will help you select suitable builders, obtain competitive prices for construction, negotiate with the preferred tenderer (if required) and prepare the contract documents.

Contract administration

Your architect will liaise with the builder to assess quality of work at key stages and ensure that contract and specifications are complied with. They will keep you informed of progress, approve variations, certify progress payments, identify defects and administer their rectification, oversee the construction through to successful completion.

The Stringybark Residence
JAWS Architects
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TAS Residential Architecture
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Photography:
Adam Gibson

Ryde Street House
Bence Mulcahy Architecture
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Winner
TAS Residential
Architecture - Houses
—
Photography:
Adam Gibson

Symmons Plains
Cumulus Studio
—
Commendation
TAS Residential
Architecture - Houses
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Anjie Blair

HOW TO FIND THE RIGHT ARCHITECT

All building projects are different – every client, every site and therefore every brief is unique. There is no single solution to your project and the range of architects will each offer their own approach. Selecting the right architect is one of the most significant decisions you can make.

When should I bring the architect into the picture?

The earlier you bring an architect on board the better. They can help you define your project in every respect, carry out site analysis and provide a variety of other pre-design services.

Should I meet with more than one firm?

Usually, yes. One obvious exception is when you already have a good relationship with an architect. Typically you should interview between two and four practices – enough to see the range of possibilities but not so many that an already tough decision will be further complicated.

How do I find suitable architects to contact?

Talk to individuals who have built similar projects. If there are projects you admire – whether similar to your own or not – find out who designed them.

Alternatively you can find an architect at www.findanarchitect.com.au

What can I learn from an interview?

You can learn how the architect may approach your project. Review the firm's work that is similar in type and size to yours or that have addressed similar issues.

What is 'green' architecture and do I need to discuss it?

'Green' or sustainable design refers to the important practice of creating architecture that is friendly to the environment, to you and to the future occupiers of your home.

Why are formal interviews desirable?

An interview addresses one issue that cannot be covered in brochures – the chemistry between you and the prospective architect.

Should I expect an architect to deliver all the services necessary to complete the project?

Not necessarily. You may have considerable project-planning, design and construction expertise yourself, and you may be capable of undertaking some tasks. Alternatively, you may find it necessary to add other consultants to the team. Discussion with your architect will establish who will coordinate owner supplied work or other services.

Smallman Street Townhouses
Reddog Architects
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Commendation
QLD Residential Architecture
- Multiple Housing
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Photography:
Christopher Frederick Jones

How should I follow up?

Follow up by contacting referees. Ask past clients to assess the performance of both the practice and the resulting architecture. Notify the selected firm or shortlisted firms as soon as possible to ensure their availability.

On what should I base my decision?

Personal confidence in the architect is paramount. Seek also an appropriate balance between design ability, technical competence, professional service and cost.

Selection is a mutual process

The most thoughtful architects are as careful in selecting their clients as owners are in selecting architects.

Be prepared to answer questions about your project's purpose, budget, timeframe, site and the team of players you anticipate being involved with the project.

Real-world work

Explore how clients and architects worked together on real projects. See how architects help their clients visualise projects, then guide them through the build.

SETTING THE DESIGN BRIEF

A brief is your wish list – it will cover everything an architect needs to know about what you want from your project. A well-written design brief is essential to success. It should be clear and unambiguous, setting out key requirements, outlining the vision and communicating your aims and aspirations.

The brief should describe the main function of the finished project, outline motivation and expectation, design direction, establish a single point of contact and set a realistic timeframe and budget.

One of an architect's most important skills and roles is helping to formulate the brief. They can point out what is possible in terms of cost and design, asking you questions and making suggestions. Your architect can be well placed to help identify the best and worst spatial characteristics of your home and to offer ideas that will enhance your living space. Your contribution at this stage is vital and will involve a number of discussions which are essential for the success of a project. The brief will form the basis of the professional contract you sign with your architect.

THE CLIENT & ARCHITECT AGREEMENT

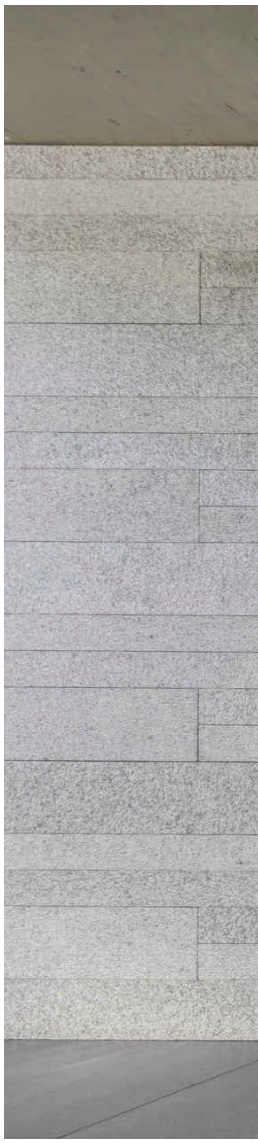
Once you have selected your architect, the responsibilities of each party and the services to be provided by the architect should be set down in a formal contract, usually referred to as an agreement. An Australian Institute of Architects Client and Architect

Agreement will include:

- Details of project
- Architectural services
- Cost and time
- Architectural fees
- Specialist consultants
- Intellectual property
- Insurances and liabilities
- Client and architect obligations
- Dispute resolution and termination
- Special conditions

For your part, the client should be prepared to:

- Provide necessary and accurate information
- Appoint the architect to act as your agent
- Cooperate with the architect to ensure efficient and satisfactory project progress
- Pay the fees, GST and disbursements



Floating House
Hancy Ellies Residence
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Robert Frith

FEES & EXPENSES

Architect's fees are a matter for negotiation: there is no standard basis for calculation. The fee will reflect the degree of personal service and design that your project involves, and will be affected by the complexity of the project. For instance, projects involving house extensions and refurbishment can be significantly more resource intensive than new builds and the repair and conservation of historic buildings even more complex leading to fees being proportionately higher.

Disbursements

These will generally be added to the fee and will be charged for items such as the cost of travel, copying drawings and documents, and for making planning or building-permit applications.

Fee options

An architect may quote their fee as a percentage of the building cost or as a lump sum. In cases where the scope of their work is harder to predict, or for services such as feasibility studies or those not relating to construction work, the quote can consist of an hourly or daily rate together with an estimate of the time required.

Payment

An architect who is retained for the entire project will typically invoice about one-third of the fee during the design stage, the same at the tender stage, and the balance during and following construction. Variable invoices may be issued at regular periods – monthly or at the end of each stage.

Park Road House
Lineburg Wang
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THE BUILDING CONTRACT

This is a vital document – the legally binding commitment between your builder and you to deliver your project. Your architect can administer this contract on your behalf. It is not uncommon for building projects to contain hidden surprises – structural difficulties such as unexpected ground conditions, for example – that can have an impact on the design and the building cost. The best way of preparing yourself is an adequate written contract, designed to manage such events fairly from each party's point of view.

An architect can advise you on the contract type, as well as be the contract administrator. They have the skill and expertise to do so – and they can minimise your risks and stress – while you may not have either the experience or the time.

Naiko Retreat
Max Pritchard Gunner Architects
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SA Residential Architecture - Houses
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Photography
Sam Noonan

What is the role of a draftsperson?

A draftsperson has the professional skills and knowledge required for the drafting and documentation of buildings. An architect is trained in taking a project from concept through to completion – including the project's drafting and documentation.

What is the role of a builder?

A builder is a professional that specialises in the construction stage of the project. Their role is to execute the architectural drawings into a built form. The builder will supervise the building works, while the architect will oversee the building work.

Being a good client

Good architecture needs collaboration and dialogue from the outset – you have to be sure that you have chosen an architect whose work you like and that you are able to work with. Be ready to add your own views and banish the misplaced idea that your architect will impose their own tastes and ideas on the project. On the contrary, your architect's aim will be to follow your brief closely and apply their skills to realise the aspirations it contains.

In conclusion

Your house will have a long life and be a very significant investment. Whether the project is for new buildings, refurbishment or adaptation, an architect is fundamental to the project's success. Careful selection and early appointment is rewarded by creating value, providing leadership and coordination, and bringing peace of mind. An architect is your professional expert in the field of design and construction of your house.

Side Kick
Archaea
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SA Residential
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Photography:
David Sievers

Back Cover:
Ryde Street House
Bence Mulcahy Architecture
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Winner
TAS Residential
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Photography:
Adam Gibson

For more information and advice on finding the right architect:

Australian Institute of Architects
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