



Client Preparation, defining architect contract terms

Clients are rarely prepared for the first architect/client site review meeting. What project criteria is necessary? What documents are needed?

If you understand what your architect needs, and your architect understand your scope of work and schedule to complete a design, that's a great start. Contracts are usually defined by phases:

Schematic Design
Design Development
Contracts Documents,
Bidding and Negotiation
Construction.

In the early schematic design, we need a lot of base site information from you:

Site documentation:

1. Site Plan
2. Legal Description
3. any existing blueprints, topography, surveys

Project parameters:

1. What do you want to build? Be specific in your list.
2. Project Budget
3. Timetable, even though this will change
4. specific architectural style you like, special interest considerations ?

Defining Client needs:

1. A list of rooms, how you live currently (size, style, features)
2. Photographs of things/rooms, designs you like
3. Ideas, sketches and drawings of features you like

Only work with signed, written agreements with licensed professionals. Keep it simple, limit your exposure to what is affordable, and trust your architect. The difficulties, as they present in the design process are simple tasks to solve. The most critical key ingredient is the communication skill you have with your architect.

- A. Everything in architecture is temporary. It lasts at best a few decades. That's the good news.
- B. The bad news is everything about architecture is expensive.
- C. Everything about permit processing is complicated, it takes longer than anticipated, involves way too many people, and is autonomously bureaucratic.
- D. When the building is completed, was it worth all this effort? Always! Together we must have a lot of humor invested, nothing, and everything is too serious! If it is not fun, just don't do it! It is beautiful, extremely valuable, and very rewarding.

Get it right in early design phase because changes during construction are expensive.

Be clear about your needs. Planning entitlements, variances, modifications to zoning, permit expediting, cost estimate take-offs, interior design, lighting, mechanical, electrical, HVAC, home theater systems integration, finishes selection even specifications writing are separate tasks and usually not part of your architect agreement. Keep it simple. I recommend starting off with a flat-fee preliminary design, a single page agreement. Once the scope of work has been clearly identified, proceed with a standard AIA Owner Architect agreement with a defined scope. The more time you give yourself and your architect for obtaining a design and permit, the better your project will become.

Thank You! Quentin Dart Parker, architect