



## Do's and Don'ts of Hiring / Working With an Architect

### Do's of Hiring the Architect

#### ***Hire the Architect Early***

This can not be understated. The right architectural firm should be able to help you beyond design and offer other assistance to understand the various elements at the beginning of a project cycle. These elements include helping to secure planning and zoning approvals, searching for the right developer (if desired), site searches, historic tax credits, engaging a construction professional and a variety of other pre-design tasks.

#### ***Check references***

Check beyond the references that an architect provides you. Look at some of the other work they've done and contact someone within that organization to ask about the work they've done. Also check references in the community at-large. Is the firm giving back to the community? Are they someone you would be proud to be associated with?

#### ***Visit the architect's office***

This is a critical step that gets overlooked by some owners. A firm's office can tell you a lot about their culture and how they work. The visit also gives you a chance to meet the individuals that would work on your project. Ask questions on the visit; make sure the Architect shows you everything, from their materials library to their computer system.

#### ***Meet the people who will be assigned to your project***

You will want to meet with the principal-in-charge or client executive of your project. This is the person who can speak on behalf of the firm and assign the resources necessary to carry out the project. You will also want to meet with the project manager, who will be your day-to-day contact and should be on the job from start to finish. Other important team members to meet include the project designer, the interior designer and the person, if different from one of the above, that will be responsible for on-site visits during construction.

### Don'ts of Hiring the Architect

#### ***Select based only on fees***

While fees are certainly one component to consider, the differences are usually minimal, especially when considered in the context of the overall project cost. Making sure the design firm can meet your functional and aesthetic goals should be the primary focus. After all, a good firm should be able to save you money in many ways, from good construction pricing to many operating factors after the building is up, including energy efficiency, productivity increases, reducing lost work days and improving morale.



### ***Mix delivery methods***

This is a classic mistake. Some owners will bring in contractors, architects and design build firms all at the same time. This often leads to confusion on the scope of the assignment. When you hire the Architect first, these options are still open to you, but know you have a professional working for you who can help guide you through the process.

### ***Working with the Architect***

Once the selection has been made, it is important to get the project off to the right start. Establish a kick-off meeting and partnering session. This session is critical to the success of the project. The key architects, engineers and representatives from the owner need to be in attendance. A successful meeting will be achieved if everyone leaves the meeting with a clear understanding of everyone's roles and responsibilities as well as a clear understanding of the vision and goals for the project. Included within the vision and goals needs to be measurable criteria for how each participant defines a successful project. How to achieve a successful project and client relationship should not be a mystery. It should be discussed openly at the very beginning of every project.

***The bottom line...***let the architect know your expectations and make sure you know their expectations as well. With good on-going communication and the right firm, you should have a successful project.