

DESIGN SERVICES SYNOPSIS

The process of planning and building is complex and comprehensive. Architects are educated, and trained through extensive experience to produce safe, functional, and delightful designs within guidelines meeting the client's intent and budget, while complying with the multitude of requirements of the building codes and municipal ordinances, striving to often exceed expectations as they draw from their unique resources of talent and perspective. The architect works to refine and interpret the client's stated needs, desires, and visions, for what may either be a calculated commercial endeavor or among the largest of personal investments. A key factor toward success in this process is working with an experienced design team which engenders trust and with which the client is comfortable on an interpersonal level.

At ARC Architectural Group, we strive to provide all clients with a team approach to design; drawing on a variety of individual backgrounds, perspectives, and expertise. We listen carefully, and integrate the information the client provides; drawing out the unstated - yet essential - intent, forming from it the design; providing a well-orchestrated solution which responds to purpose rather than preconception. We manage the project design process closely to bring dreams and visions into reality. When appropriate, the environment we create will reflect the Owner's persona. We believe that space planning for the interior built experience, correctly done, should not only be functional but should exude a life of its own that invigorates and uplifts the privileged occupants and users of the building.

We provide a range of services to our clients, from: limited to comprehensive; consultation; owner's representation; interior space planning; architectural design & structural engineering; to complete architectural services for both complete new construction and for renovations of, and additions to contemporary and historic buildings. Our firm's approach to this process is engaging and well-rounded. Expect this process to be personal and rewarding for the Client as well as for the Architect.

For projects of scope requiring state-of-the-art technical engineering we have established relationships with multi-discipline engineering consultants with extensive experience in structural, mechanical, plumbing, and electrical engineering, possessing an impressive list of project involvement credits and clients. This established team resource supports ARC Architectural Group's capacity to service the project requirements of a wide range of commercial, municipal, and light-industrial clients.

While the general classifications of the phased approach to design services are widely accepted within the architectural design community, the specific information describing ARC's firm philosophy, approach to project design, and advice to clients contained within this Design Services Synopsis is proprietary and may not be appropriated and represented as authored by others in whole or in parts. ARC Architectural Group asserts copy rights for this synopsis, as well as for original designs, and construction documents for all products of the firm's design process.

The Process:

The design process is dynamic, challenging, and exciting. ARC's team members approach the process as a multi-faceted collaboration. Each designer has a different approach within a proven design process protocol. Each phase of the design process focuses on different aspects, at increasing levels of intensity. At times the phases do become intertwined and overlap. Throughout, it is absolutely necessary for the team to have a clear vision of the expected outcome.

Phase I: Programming

Phase one is referred to as programming the facility or the project, and involves listening to the client's requirements, clearly establishing the client's intent, understanding the Client's personal style and purpose. This is a critical interaction between client and designer which may present a challenge. Articulating the client's pre-conceptions and full expectations is not always easy. The skill of an experienced interviewer drives success in this process. The client is encouraged to provide pictures, notes, precedents, examples, or any other reference material pertinent to the project. A plot plan or survey of the site is helpful. If the project is to be an addition to an existing structure, access to all available plans, documents, and notes descriptive of the existing building speed the process. We verify the accuracy of all such historical information. We document all existing conditions, restrictions, and requirements of state building codes and municipal ordinances. We photograph the site and/or existing structure. The client's budget for the project is identified and assessed. This phase generates a large picture of the project.

Phase II: Schematic Design

Once the program is framed, the structure begins to take on its form. We begin this phase with a series of sketches in both hand drawn and computer generated formats. This will convey space planning relationships, volumes, massing, and engagements. The preliminary or intended location of the structure on the site is explored. We work collaboratively with the client. We will use traditional graphic and/or 3-D models for clarity. This will assist the client to envision the design in its entirety.

At this point in the process very preliminary cost figures, based on gross area and type of construction may be developed; but the cost estimate is extremely general and to be refined as the design develops. Anticipate that systems and materials selections, unforeseen circumstances and local economic conditions, effect cost.

As the Schematic Design Phase proceeds, our team presents an understandable conceptual design, meeting the client's initial criteria for approval and further refinement. With the investigative process concluded a re-evaluation of original goals, expectations, and budget is made. Appropriate modifications are made prior to developing the construction documents. Changes are easily absorbed now.

Phase III: Design Development

The architect and client have now concluded conceptual planning. The direction, scope, and many features of the project have been established. Then begins the process of developing and refining design. Detailed, dimensioned floor plans, elevations and sections are drawn. Structural decisions are made. The interiors become well-defined. Wall heights, window placements, and size and slope of the roof are explored and presented. Preliminary consideration of placement and extent of interior features such as cabinetry are considered. Typically at this point the construction drawings begin to clearly portray the work to come. All information is clearly spelled out on the plan and/or specified within a project manual, which begins to be assembled in Phase III. Interior and exterior materials, finishes, lighting, doors, windows, cabinets, flooring, and wall finishes are evaluated and selected for review and approval by the client. Options are identified. These specification decisions are used for an accurate, quantifiable refinement of budget allowances. This phase asks many questions of the designer and of the Client. Weigh the aesthetics and functionality of the interior spaces with care. Finalize the configuration and appearance of the building's exterior. At this point the drawings are still simply, although thoroughly developed, graphic tools for discussion; a tool for communication; relatively easily changed. This turns design drawings into construction drawings. Again, the cost of the project as designed is reviewed for acceptability within the client's budget. Among the least acceptable outcomes is a well designed and specified project which the client cannot afford to build.

Phase IV: Construction Documents

This phase of the process includes final engineering, dimensioning, detailing, coordination and specifications for the design. It takes all decisions made to this point and graphically presents and describes the scope of work necessary to accomplish the project. The construction documents consist of construction drawings and written specifications. The information contained in a complete set of drawings and specifications allows competitive bidding by contractors and submittal for review and approval by the appropriate state and local plan review agencies.

The construction drawings are a detailed presentation of the location, size, dimensions, systems, and materials. The specifications are written documentation outlining bidding process, scope of work, material and product selections, and the levels of quality to be met for construction. The general contractor, subcontractors, and material suppliers use these documents to generate the actual cost of project, and to build it. The construction documents are included by reference within a contractual agreement between the client and the general contractor. It is essential that all quotations for the work be based upon a complete set of construction documents. A well defined specification permits no deviation without prior approval of the design professional and requires that no changes be authorized without written approval from the Owner. The Architect's involvement helps protect the best interests of the Owner. Items not addressed in the document are left to the contractor's discretion and reliance on established trade practices. Thus, comprehensive construction documents produce accurate competitive pricing and an efficient construction process.

Phase V: Selection of Contractor

As we enter bidding procedures and selection of the contractor for the work we evaluate contractor qualifications as well price. The client's interests are best served through retaining the architect throughout the bidding and construction process. There are several ways to select a contractor. Among them are competitive bidding, design-build, and negotiations.

If competitively bid, we advise requesting quotations from 3 or 4 general contractors. The quotations received are examined for thoroughness, compliance with the construction drawings & specifications, compliance with the bidding requirements, and evaluated for price and completeness. If the competitive quotation amounts are closely grouped, it is an indication that all bidders understood the construction documents in a similar manner. If one of the quotations received is significantly lower than the others, it may be an indication that the contractor has omitted a required component. Entering a contract in such a situation is unwise. Accepting the lowest bid may not be in the client's best interest.

If the project takes the design-build approach, a pre-selected general contractor is involved at regular intervals in the design process; confirming budget parameters and providing advice regarding systems, materials and methods, and expected time for completion of the work. This assists the architect in efficiently developing a design that meets both the needs of the client and the client's budget.

If a negotiated contract approach is used, a pre-selected general contractor provides a quotation for the work described in the construction documents and then enters discussions with the client to set the price based upon options and alternative bid items. The architect's involvement in the process provides assurance that the client's programmed needs are met.

Our firm will coordinate the bidding process and answer the contractor's questions as well as evaluate suggested substitutions of materials and/or components. During the bidding process, any additional information, details, and specifications appropriate for clarifying or further describing the work is distributed to all bidding contractors in the form of addenda issued by the Architect.

We will provide the client with the advice necessary to evaluate the general contract quotations. We do recognize that in the final analysis, the decision rests with the client.

Phase VI: Construction

Once the contract for general construction has been awarded, the architect's work takes on a new role. The architect will serve as the client's representative by monitoring the contractors' work performance and compliance with the construction documents.

The working relationship between architect and the general contractor involves answering questions by phone and regular site visits to observe work progress, providing any supplemental information, direction, & interpretation as needed. The architect will document and periodically photograph progress of project. The architect will view and approve materials, color selections, and finishes in accordance with specifications and directions from the Owner.

Service Levels

When you engage an architect, you are paying for expertise. ARC Architectural Group offers various levels of professional services, from preliminary planning, through construction documents, bidding procedures, construction monitoring & administration, confirmation of progress for payment purposes, to post--construction evaluation of occupancy satisfaction. The client may contract for either full or limited scope of services by the architect. The responsibility for construction means & methods, techniques and schedules rests with the contractor.

Fee Structure

Fees are dependent upon the levels of service, and are negotiable. In each case, compensation should be fair and reasonable. The designer should be paid for time applied to the project. This critical agreement underscores proper performance by the designer and fair treatment by the client.

A fixed-fee method is commonly used for small projects with routine or limited requirements.

An hourly fee for the actual time applied to the project by the various members of the design team may also be used. Detailed invoices are provided monthly. This method is typical of smaller projects, or when the architect is employed as a consultant.

An hourly fee, with a not-to exceed amount is also used.

Another method to establish compensation is the percentage of the total cost of construction method may also be used. The client agrees to accurately disclose the actual cost of construction to the architect. Although trust is involved, verification may be essential. The construction cost is based upon real or reasonable costs for contract materials and labor. Adjustments may be made for project components accomplished through the use of lower than market rate labor. The percentage could range from 6% to 15% , depending upon project size, scope, complexity, and level of service requested. In general, the percentage is higher for small projects.

A combination of fee structures is also possible. Discussion will determine which method will be appropriate and beneficial for the project.

On projects of limited scope, a simple letter of proposal and acceptance is used to form the contract between architect and client. The proposal sets out scope of services, timeframe for performance, compensation amount and time, and standard terms & conditions.

On projects of larger scope and complexity, the contract is formed utilizing forms of agreement published by either The American Institute of Architects (AIA), or by The Association of Licensed Architects (ALA). These contracts clearly define the responsibility of both the architect and the owner and have been refined, tested, and found to be legally sound over many decades.