

Building or renovating a house?

How to feel perfectly at home ...with an Architect!



Congratulations. If you're planning to renovate, expand, or build a new house from the ground up, you're about to set forth on one of the most exciting and rewarding experiences of your life.

It may also be one of the most challenging. Few people realize the extent of the demands that lie ahead until they're in the midst of countless problems and decisions, from zoning restrictions and building codes to a bewildering array of building materials and methods. Simply agreeing on a design can exert tremendous stress on even the most compatible of couples and close knit of families.

This undertaking is not simply one of the largest investments you'll ever make. It's one you'll live with, and live on, for a long time to come. Your success in achieving precisely what you want for the budget you've established may well come down to a single decision - the decision to work with an architect.

EIGHT SIMPLE STEPS TOWARD FEELING PERFECTLY AT HOME WITH AN ARCHITECT

Architects are thorough planners and creative problem solvers. While not all of them are interested in residential projects, those who are find tremendous satisfaction in helping their clients to achieve their goals.

1. START BY SEEING ARCHITECTS IN AN ENTIRELY NEW LIGHT

As professionals, architects provide much more than creative solutions to the problems you've defined. Because they're not committed to any product line, building material or construction method, you can rely on them to provide impartial and unbiased advice. From helping you decide what you want to build to seeing you get the quality you're paying for, they are responsible only to you. As your personal consultants, they have the education, the training and the experience to guide you through the maze of decisions that lie ahead. They also have the ability to see the final solution in three dimensions, and to communicate this vision to you.

2. DON'T LET THE SIZE OF YOUR BUDGET HOLD YOU BACK

You may feel a simple kitchen expansion or relatively modest house doesn't call for an architect's services. On the contrary, they're precisely the people to call to see your construction dollars go further. As creative planners, they're experienced in developing solutions to small-space challenges. Instead of simply looking at building areas, walls and materials, they look at how you live – move – prepare meals – entertain. This focus on the human factor may lead them to propose an alternative solution that will provide more value than the one you're contemplating.

3. CONSIDER THE IMPORTANCE OF PROTECTING YOUR INVESTMENT

Not only do architects recommend alternative solutions where appropriate, they prevent costly mid-project surprises by helping your contractor quote accurately. They control construction over-runs by resolving decisions on paper rather than on the site. They protect your investment by ensuring the quality of your project is not compromised. Looking ahead, they ensure a better return on this investment because a well-designed exterior and well-planned interior add to your house's resale value.

4. DO A LITTLE HOMEWORK

Start building a list of architects by asking friends and associates for recommendations, by approaching people whose homes catch your eye and asking them for names of their architects, or by contacting the Manitoba Association of Architects. Then follow up with a call to each name on your list. Ask if they have the time for and interest in your project, how they work, and if they have experience in similar projects. Feel free to request references, and to follow upon them.

5. SELECT THE *RIGHT* ARCHITECT

Narrow your list to two or three names, then arrange face-to-face interviews. Once you've met with them, you should be able to make a choice. Your decision might be based on relevant experience, approach to design, or simply the sense of finding someone who truly understands what you want. Finding an architect with whom you feel completely at home is of utmost value. You'll be working together on a highly personal undertaking, so it's essential you begin your working relationship with a high degree of mutual trust and rapport.

6. LEARN HOW THEY WORK

While no two projects are exactly the same, architects traditionally approach their work in clear stages. First comes *identifying the scope* of the project and defining clear goals. During this stage, they develop a proposal showing you what is to be done, how much it will cost, and what the timelines will be. Second is *design development*, when they translate your goals into three-dimensional concepts. Next comes *construction drawings*, where all the practical issues are resolved, down to the placement of every light switch. Finally is *construction*, where they'll help with everything from scheduling crews to double-checking invoices and issuing payments.

7. TAKE YOUR PROJECT ONE STEP AT A TIME

Naturally, architects prefer to work with you right through to completion of construction, helping to defuse difficult situations and resolving problems on the spot. While this is often the most stressful stage for their clients, for the architect, there is magic in pulling the project together. However, many people approach architects only for assistance in developing the initial concept.

8. FEEL AT EASE IN ASKING ABOUT FEES

You'll find most architects will be pleased to meet with you without charge to discuss your needs. This is time well spent for them, as it is for you. They'll be able to determine the scope of your project and decide whether or not *their* skills match *your* requirements. If they do, they'll develop an estimate for your review and approval.

Whether they simply develop a design for you or guide you through the entire process, no work commences without your approval. You'll know in advance what the costs will be. Their fees are based on a recommended schedule published by the Manitoba Association of Architects. Fees may be based on an hourly rate, a fixed sum, a percentage of the construction costs, or a combination of these methods. You'll find most architects will be pleased to work with you to develop fees and terms with which you can feel at home.

ARCHITECTS CREATE ENVIRONMENTS WITH LASTING VALUE

No matter what the size or scope of your project – whether you're starting from the ground up on a new project, developing a new use for an existing building or undertaking an interior or exterior renovation – call them. Architects also provide good advice and professional services on a wide range of undertakings, including:

- Building and materials research
- Building condition & functional evaluations
- Building commissioning
- Building health analysis
- Economic feasibility studies
- Environmental evaluations
- Code evaluations
- Facility management
- Facility programming
- Feasibility studies
- Independent building reviews
- Interior design
- Landscape design
- Lifecycle costing
- Long-range planning
- Post-occupancy evaluations
- Project management
- Promotional services
- Renovations/retrofitting
- Retrofitting facilities for the disabled
- Rezoning applications
- Site evaluations
- Tenant layout and furnishings
- Urban planning and design

If you would like to know the names of architects that are interested in undertaking single family residential projects, you should conduct a search in the Register of Firms that is posted on the MAA's website at the following location:

https://www.mbarchitects.org/firm_search.php

*Only registered or licensed members of the Manitoba Association of Architects may legally practice architecture and use the title "Architect".