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## **The Best Questions to ask BEFORE you Sign up with an Architect**

OK, so you're ready to start with the process of wanting to design a home. Well, we know that choosing the right Architect for your project can be quite an arduous task. There are a lot of factors to consider before making a selection and many times it can get a bit overwhelming. Different Architects will have different unique styles, design approaches, experiences, fee structures and methodologies....not to mention personalities. ☺ We believe that in order to achieve a successful project it's absolutely imperative to find that right architect that responds to your style, needs, professional ability and of course personality. In addition, you should be able to communicate easily with your architect and enjoy the process... after all, designing a house should be fun and exciting and you don't get to do that very often. Below is a list of questions you can consider asking in order to determine which architect may be the right architect for you.

This is a pretty extensive list and I don't know if you need to ask all the questions, but I would certainly review the list and see which ones are particular important to you. I've also broken down the questions as they pertain to different aspects of the work....and then even more specific on each topic if you want to dig in deep!! Enjoy ☺

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### **General / Project Team:**

1. Are you an Actual Architect? Are you licensed and registered?
2. What's your experience and how long have you been doing this?
3. Can you provide us with a list of References?
  - a. I would ask for recent projects and some that are older.
4. Who is actually working on my Project?
  - a. Who oversees this project every day? Who's the principal designer?
  - b. Will the principal designer be involved the whole time?
  - c. Who will we be meeting with for changes and revisions?
  - d. How many people will be working on my project?
5. How many people are in your firm?
6. How busy is the Architect and how many other projects are you working on right now?
7. Has the architect worked on similar projects of similar SF, style or Caliber?
  - a. Have you done any project in this specific Community or subdivision?
8. Where does our project fall in line (importance) with all the others?
  - a. Is this project the best you've ever done or the smallest / least expensive you've done. (You want to be priority)
  - b. Are you interested in this Project...Is this an important project for you?
9. Does the Architect draw all the Construction Documents in-house with his/her own staff?
  - a. If the Architect outsources production, quality control is extremely difficult and may result in issues in the field or unintentional results or conditions.
  - b. If it is outsourced, how long have you worked with that person?
10. What sets you apart from other firms!
11. AND.....Best questions to ask any professional... "What am I not asking?". (What else should I be concerned about or what else do I need to know before I hire you. I feel this is an important question when you ask any professional about their area of expertise...after all, they are the pro and probably know a lot better what questions you should ask them)

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**Process / Design / Timing:**

1. What is the firm's timing to start a new Project?
2. What is your Process?
  - a. What are the actual steps in the Complete Design Process?
  - b. How long will the whole Process take?
3. Can the Architect guide you in understand current market conditions for cost/SF expectations?
  - a. Do you help with Cost estimating?
  - b. How and when do you handle this?
  - c. How can you help me value engineer my home.
4. How do you work with HOA's or Design review Boards?
  - a. Who does all the submittals?
  - b. What happens if the HOA does not approve my plans?
5. How will the Architect keep the Clients Budget in mind and ensure the design will reflect the Client's needs & goals?
6. What does the Architect feel are the most important issues/ Challenges of the project? How will he/she resolve and approach these?
7. Does your Firm have a design Philosophy?
8. What is your "Green" Philosophy? Sustainability?
  - a. How can you help me make my house as "Green" as possible and make my home as environmentally friendly as possible.

**Service/Deliverables/Construction Phase:**

1. What do I as the Owner need to provide?
2. What does the architect deliver as a Final Product?
3. What kind of graphic drawings, Cad drawings or 3D Generated drawings will the Architect be able to furnish?
4. How does your firm maintain a quality control / internal check on Construction Documents?.
5. How do you work with Builders? Engineer? Other design consultants such as Interior Designer or Audio/Visual Consultants?
6. Can the Architect help you find a Builder?
7. Do you get commissions from Builders you refer work to?
8. What is the Architects role during the Construction Phase?
9. What services do you provide during Construction and how are these charged?

### **Fees & Billing & Money Stuff:**

1. What are the Architect's Fees? Can you estimate an approximate TOTAL fee based on some Sf assumptions? (Make sure you get a very clear answer on this.)
2. How often does billing occur? (How are the payments broken down?)
3. What is NOT included or what else does the Homeowner need to pay for or coordinate?
4. What are considered additional fees and what would constitute extra charges?
5. How does the Architect charge for Change orders during Construction?
6. Have you ever been sued or are in a Lawsuit? For what and why? (I think it's important to ask and then evaluate the answer . It's not unusual for professionals to get sued, but it's good to get an explanation and then just see how you like the answer. )

Well, we hope this list of questions helped you organize your thoughts a little and you'll notice some questions may be more important to you than others. Again, I don't think you have to ask all of them, but just pick out the ones that are significant to you and hopefully you will arrive at an intelligent and professional selection for your Architect...and one that fits your style and personality. Good Luck and feel free to call us if we can be of service. We'd be happy to answer any and all of the questions above from our standpoint! ☺

Regards,  
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