

CONSUMERS GUIDE

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# How to hire an Architect



# CONSUMERS GUIDE: HOW TO HIRE AN ARCHITECT

## WHERE TO START

Few projects are as daunting, or as satisfying, as building a house. The options are infinite, the decisions to be made seem endless, and the financial and emotional investments are substantial. The benefits of doing it well last for years.

There's an old Yankee tradition that says you can do it yourself. There's a lumberyard in your town that will design your house for free if you buy their materials, and a contractor nearby who includes the design work in his package. Why do you need an architect? In truth, many very simple jobs don't need an architect. Most houses, on the other hand, will benefit from an architect, and the value added will be well worth the cost.

Architects can save you money and time. They can steer your project through code approvals, recommend up-to-date materials and systems, get competitive bidding from contractors, and insure high quality construction. The biggest benefit? Good design. A well-designed house enhances your life from the moment you move in and returns its cost when it is sold. The right architect will give form to your dreams, arrange your rooms to help your daily life run smoothly, and surprise you with features that you never considered.

The nine topics in this guide can help you choose the right architect.

## Finding an architect

As in many other professional fields, word of mouth is the architect's most powerful marketing tool. General contractors and other trade-related personnel, as well as friends and colleagues, are good sources for referrals. More and more, however, internet websites will lead you to the right group of candidates. On the architect's website, look at previous work, read about design intent, get a feel for style and language. Is it about blending in with the neighborhood? Does it preserve the site or overpower it? Does it make a statement? Is that the statement you want to make? Is it coherent? Is it environmentally sound? How does it make you feel? How would you feel if you lived in it? Then, start a conversation. Make an appointment for a consultation. Meet with the one who will do the work.