

## CHRISTOPHER M. DELANO, architect

WHAT IS THE VALUE IN HIRING AN ARCHITECT? The following information may help you better understand what you can expect from an Architect and what you should demand from your project and your hard-earned money. See the attachment, "The Architectural Process" to better understand the headings to the right.

### Programming Phase

**PLAN FOR THE FUTURE:** The programming phase of the process will help to flush out the details of what you want, and why you want it. Many times during this phase, the wish list changes drastically, because the Architect and clients will be exploring the potential of the project from every angle. It becomes an "avenue of discovery" where the team becomes better acquainted with each other and the true potential of the project, both in physical terms and in emotional, will transpire.

**HOW DO WE WORK TOGETHER?:** The process of designing and creating a building involves collaboration. It is a team effort between the Owners, the Architect, and the Contractor with no one person being able to do it on their own. The Architect's role in this process is a translator of ideas into the language of habitable space, sculpture, and construction. These ideas originate from the owners: they range from functional ideas of number of bedrooms or a house good for entertaining; to more abstract comments of coziness or sunlit spaces addressing glare, passive solar principles, or shade; to blurring the boundaries of the house and landscape. The ideas are as unique as every project. It is these discussions and sharing of information which provides the fuel for the process.

**BUILDINGS COST MONEY:** Define a realistic budget, large or small, and plan to spend it. An Architect is knowledgeable on the entire building process and how each item or decision will affect the cost. By using the Architect as a tool, he/she can help you spend your money wisely, maximizing beauty and quality of space for every dollar.

**DO YOU WANT IT YESTERDAY?:** The Architectural process from the first meeting until it is ready to be built will take time. The time frame will depend on the scale of the project and its complexity, but this is rarely less than 2-3 months- and often it is more. The Architect will collaborate with you to design the space where you will spend more than 80% of your life. In order to do this effectively, there is a getting-to-know each-other-period where, as a team, you will be creating a concert of space to complement your life and to highlight the site on which it is built. This happens through an iterative process

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of exploration where you will learn more about yourselves, and how space, material, and layout affect us all.

### Schematic Design Phase

**CLEAR PROBLEMS HAVE CLEAR SOLUTIONS:** Architects are problem solvers. They are trained to identify, compile, and prioritize problems, and to solve them in a beautiful and cost effective way. The first stage of the Architectural process, programming, is used to identify all the issues, specific to your needs. The subsequent 'schematic design' portion is an artistic and iterative process whereby the sculpture of building is created to solve the problems at hand.

**WHAT STYLE WILL IT BE?:** Styles, such as 'colonial' or 'cottage' refer to the general appearance of the building from the outside. Many styles, however, such as 'colonial' or 'cape', are dependant on a particular floor plan, or layout of the rooms, to effectively make the style work. Because key features of a particular style include window shapes/sizes and placement, roof lines, and details of the columns and siding treatment, it is important to realize the limitations a stylistic goal will have on the design. Often beginning with a particular style in mind gives the owner some comfort in predicting they will like the final design. I would argue that a better way to ensure you will like the final design is to review portfolios of various Architects to get a flavor of his/her artistic preferences. Keep in mind that each project comes with its unique "problems" to solve. Your project will look different because your issues will all be unique.

### Design Development Phase

**STAYING ON BUDGET:** Many times, we cannot afford everything we want. The Architect is skilled with many techniques which will help you whittle down your desires into affordable solutions. He/she also can help with phasing such projects over time, so that the "finished" project may be solved in ten years rather than one, thereby allowing you to accumulate the money over a longer period of time.

**MATERIAL:** Materials are the third most important component of a building, behind layout and sculpture. Materials work in concert with the sculpture to provide and enhance its expression. The chosen materials and how they go together are a large

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component of a good design, contributing to the character of the space, the punctuation of the building, and the durability of the structure.

Construction Documentation

**THE DETAILS MATTER:** Will your building leak when the wind blows? Will it age gracefully with little maintenance? Will it be a responsible steward of our environment? Architects are skilled at putting buildings together. They are trained to understand how materials perform over time, which options fit into your budget, and how to join them so they will remain weather tight and beautiful. As part of their services, Architects will communicate all the details of a building through drawings. These Drawings become the medium of communication through which the building is constructed.

Construction Administration

**TRUST BUT VERIFY:** Many materials and methods are used in construction. A good contractor is imperative in this process. (see "Choosing a Contractor") He/she is the one who will organize and build your project. The best drawings in the world will not ensure a well built and beautiful project. Because of this, it is necessary for the Architect to be involved at some level during construction. This is a form of checks and balances. The Architect will confirm conformance with the construction documents, review pay applications from the Contractor, and generally act as a representative of the owner in the construction process.

**VALUE:** A useful metaphor to describe the Architect's value in the building process is to look at a comparison with food. Food can range from strictly useful, to highly pleasurable, and an experience to savor and linger over. How do you see your project?