

**H**iring an architect may seem like a luxury, or you might say “I can do it myself,” or “my builder can handle that.” Before you go any further, read this short article that might change some preconceptions you may have about architects.

### **“Architects are too expensive.”**

Building something is one of the largest investments a person can make. Few tangible assets actually appreciate in value; a fine home or other building will. An architect-designed project can make that investment even more valuable. The most basic piece of advice given to clients is you can have a poorly designed project or you can have a well designed project, but in the end, they will probably cost about the same, so why not invest in having your project designed well.

### **“My builder says I don't need an architect.”**

In a world of increasing specialization, architects are 100% focused on creating the perfect, unique design for each of their clients. This is not to say we don't appreciate considerable interaction with builders. Architects frequently employ Design/Build project delivery methods in which the client's preferred builder is chosen and will influence a project from early on in the process.

Architects bring design expertise to the project that is necessary to protect both the client's investment and public safety. Nearly all states require a licensed architect to be involved in the design and construction of buildings. Here is an excerpt from the New York State laws governing building construction:

“All plans, drawings and specifications relating to the construction or alteration of buildings or structures which must be filed with a building code official must be stamped with the seal of an architect or professional engineer. (N.Y. Educ. Law § 7307 and Title 19 NYCRR Part 1203.3(a)(3)(1))

The following exceptions do not require the stamp or seal of a licensed, registered architect: (N.Y. Educ. Law § 7307(5))

1. Farm buildings and other buildings used solely and directly for agricultural purposes.

2. Single family residential buildings 1,500 square feet or less, not including garages, carports, porches, cellars, or uninhabitable basements or attics.
3. Alterations costing \$10,000 or less within New York City and \$20,000 or less outside of New York City, if these alterations do not involve changes affecting the structural safety or public safety of the building or structure.”

### **“I have a floor plan already, why spend money on an architect?”**

Hiring an architect to design your project is like having a skilled tailor create a custom suit. Measurements are taken, preferences are established, and materials are selected. The result is a creation designed exclusively for you with a perfect fit. While the initial cost may be more, the final product will bring comfort and joy for years to come, having been created with your exact specifications.

By asking the right questions, guiding the client to identify the elements that will make their project special, architects “tailor” goals and create a custom environment. In doing so, architects are not only creating their client's personal vision, but also building value into the home so that it becomes an asset with both financial and emotional rewards.

### **“I just want the drawings.”**

Unfortunately with residential projects, it's common for architects to hand over their construction drawings to the client and have no further contribution or input during construction. This is again generally related to the perception of saving money. Here are some myths about this important service:

- **“The contractor will work out the design.”**  
There are some builders who will do this, but typically contractors want to build it, not design it. Most prefer to have all the design decisions made and documented, as this simplifies the entire process of completing the project.

- “Contractors don’t want architects on the job site.”  
All good builders are glad to have the architect around and often call with questions. Building is a collaborative effort, that’s how it’s supposed to work.
- “I’m paying twice if the architect and the builder are there.”  
The architect is the designer; the contractor is the builder. There is no overlap, just coordination and collaboration. That’s always money well spent.
- “The contractor can make any changes that are needed.”  
The architect is the “author” of the construction documents, and knows the history and reasons behind design decisions. Making a substitution needs to be done in context and with knowledge of what the implications of a substitution really are. Making a change “to save money” may produce a result that isn’t what was expected. Is the change in the best interest of the owner, or does it simply make the contractor’s life easier?
- “I can get this built on my own by being the general contractor.”  
STOP! Unless you have construction experience, **forget it**. If you take just this piece of advice, you’ll save yourself a fortune in medical care and/or marital counseling. The assumption that homeowners can manage the construction project themselves can sometimes fail in spectacular ways.

Architects believe in collaboration, in a team approach, and have your best interests in mind. When you hire an architect, retaining that architect during the construction phase is the standard expectation. Don’t let go of the person who knows the design best if you care about the outcome.

### Thank You

Thanks for taking the time to read this brief explanation about the need for architects. Hopefully it gave you a clearer understanding of some of the ways architects provide value, and can help you achieve your goals.

If you’re ready to get started on a project you’ve been thinking about, we’re ready to help. Please contact Identity Design, PLLC with any questions you may have about this process or anything architecture/building related. Please don’t hesitate to [contact us](#) for some friendly advice.

## RECOMMENDED READING

Johnston, Amy. *What Your Contractor Can't Tell You: The Essential Guide to Building and Renovating*. [S.l.]: Shube Pub., 2008. Print.

Krapf, Richard D. *Considerations on Hiring An Architect: How The Design Process Works*. N.p.: n.p., 2013. Print.

Krapf, Richard D. *Considerations On Hiring An Architect: Residential Services*. N.p.: n.p., 2013. Print.

Krapf, Richard D. *Considerations on Hiring An Architect: I Don't Need An Architect! Common Myths and Misconceptions*. N.p.: n.p., 2013. Print.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Portions of this document are taken with acknowledgement to the following sources:

Borson, Bob. "Life of an Architect." *Life of an Architect*. N.p., 23 Jan. 2010. Web. 08 Aug. 2013.23