

ARCHITECTURE TECHNOLOGY, P.C.

1304 Business Park Drive
Traverse City, MI 49686-8640
(231) 933-4489

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Comments on "Selecting an Architect"

Since design services are not a commodity, owners who select an architect (or any design professional) on a "lowest-bid basis" are often disappointed in the quality and level of services they receive. Instead, I recommend selection based upon the following considerations:

1. Good Chemistry

Find individuals with whom you are comfortable working and communicating. Many building projects involve assembling a team including owners, architects, engineers, interior designers, contractors, material suppliers, manufacturers, and others. Putting together a team of people who work well together and who are committed to the project is critical to achieving a successful outcome.

2. Scope of Services

Understand the level of services that the architect is offering. Architectural services can range from limited assistance with preliminary planning to comprehensive services including involvement in design, contract documentation, bidding and negotiation, and construction contract administration. For most commercial building projects, design documentation sufficient to apply for and obtain a building permit from the local building code jurisdiction is the minimum level of professional service required. I recommend more comprehensive design services because the architect's involvement throughout all phases of a project's design and construction insures continuity of the owner's objectives from conceptual design all the way through the details of construction.

3. Project Scope, Budget and Schedule

Find an architect who understands the project's objectives, and who agrees that the project's budget and schedule are realistic and achievable. These constraints should be discussed in the earliest phases of a project, since proceeding with detailed design services for a project that will be too costly or time-consuming for the owner to build is an expensive and embarrassing mistake for both owner and architect.

4. Strengths and Talents

As in any professional field, individual architects tend to excel in specific areas. Discuss the architect's strengths and weaknesses and understand his or her areas of focus within the field. Since no two projects are alike, an architect should be selected based upon a balance of design ability, technical competence, professional service, and cost that is appropriate for the individual project. The owner should have confidence in the architect's ability to perform the design services required to achieve the project's goals.

Rick Skendzel is President of Architecture Technology, P.C. Mr. Skendzel has served as President of the Northern Michigan Chapter and as a member of the Michigan Board of Directors of AIA (American Institute of Architects).

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