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What do Architects Do?

There are many misconceptions about why you would need an architect and how they can help you with your project. Here are just a few...

All I Need Are Four Walls and a Roof...I Don't Need An Architect.

Not True. Architects help make decisions. After talking with an architect, many people are surprised at their own definite ideas in what they want in a house. Architects help you think about how a building functions. They can design a house that is flexible enough to grow with a young, working couple and who expect children later. They can design an inexpensive, energy-efficient, fully accessible home for retired people on a fixed income. They can show how a house built for one family can be remodeled into apartments.

Anyway, All I Need Is A Builder Or Contractor.

Not True. The architect is the single professional who has the training and experience to guide you through the entire building process. The architect serves as the owner's agent. As the head of a team of specialist (engineers, landscape architects, contractors, etc.), an architect's first obligation is to look out for your interests. Architects' drawings and construction documents, which tell the contractor precisely what to build, set down your exact requirements. Your architect follows your contractor's work to make sure there are no surprises - you know what you will get.

An Architect is A Luxury I Cannot Afford.

Not True. Architects' fees are not just added on top of your project costs. They can save you money in many ways. An Architect oversees your budget and negotiates to get the best materials and workmanship at a good price. Much more importantly, an architect's design can greatly reduce your energy and maintenance costs, which add up to many times the purchase price of the home over time. They can turn a difficult lot into a successful building site. They can spend time planning and developing your ideas fully to avoid costly refinements after construction is underway. They can make sure that bids for construction are based exactly on what you wanted and expected so you really do get the best price. They can find parts of the project that you can do yourself, or show you how to act as your own contractor.

Architects Just Do Blueprints.

Not True. Today, the best answer to the question, "What do architects do?" may be "What do you want them to do?" Renovation? Energy analysis? Site selection? Interiors? Cost analysis? Construction management? In designing your project, architects can add a porch, a skylight - or design a complete house. They can adapt an old building to a new use and keep its character. They can provide a cost estimate. They can make a building safe for occupancy. They can fit a building to a difficult site. They can find skilled craftspeople. They can enlarge your present house so you no longer need to move. Or they can just talk to you about how you want your house to be.

Architects see the big picture. They solve problems creatively. They help you get the most from your construction dollar. They make your life easier. If you want an architect who is serious about his or her profession and providing you with the best your money can buy, just look for the "AIA."