

# WORKING WITH ARCHITECTS

A RESOURCE FROM THE CENTER FOR CONGREGATIONS

**W**orking successfully with an architect depends upon cooperation, thoughtful consideration, prayerful planning, research and adherence to timelines and budgets. Although challenges are inherent to any architectural project, these barriers can be minimized with good planning, open communication and an on-going awareness of the true goals of the project. Following are a list of tips and pointers from architects and congregational leaders to assist those embarking on the winding road of architectural planning.

**DISCUSS WHAT IS DRIVING THIS PROJECT.** Be sure a project is being considered for the right reasons. Sometimes dissatisfaction with the current facility can be a sign that other problems exist in the congregation – the inadequacy of the building is just one problem that everyone can agree upon.

**LOOK AT THE REAL NEEDS OF THE CONGREGATION.** Work with your architect to evaluate your congregation's needs. Sometimes a critical review helps identify the next step.

**CONSIDER ALL ASPECTS OF YOUR MINISTRY.** When planning for the new building, remember to consider the worship area, classrooms, fellowship hall, offices, acoustics, entrances and exits, parking and presentation to passers by.

**ALWAYS PLAN FOR THE FUTURE.** When considering a facility change, count on your architect to help you look toward future growth. Don't just think about what is needed now, but what may be needed 10 years from now.

**KNOW HOW MUCH MONEY CAN BE SPENT.** Know up front what the congregation can spend. Be sure to let the architect know this immediately. Establish priorities and set acceptable budgetary ranges.

**CHECK WITH YOUR NEIGHBORS.** Let the experiences of others help you. Visit other area congregational facilities to see what you like and don't like about their buildings. Find those that "feel right" and contact the architects. Talk to those from other congregations who have recently been through building projects. Their knowledge and advice can help with new ideas and better understanding.

**HELPING YOU FIND CREATIVE SOLUTIONS.** These professionals have extensive experience in the building industry. Architects know how to solve problems creatively. They often look beyond the walls and windows to find creative solutions and the best design and environment for you.

**SELECT YOUR ARCHITECT WITH CARE.** Interview and hire professionals. You will work with your architect for a long time, so put thoughtful consideration into the choosing.

**KNOW YOUR ARCHITECT'S PLANS AND PRACTICES.** Ask each potential architect about his or her design philosophy. Find out how the architect plans to go about information gathering on your project. Ask how priorities are established and decisions made. These questions can help you determine who is the best candidate for the job.



**LET YOUR ARCHITECT HELP SELECT A CONTRACTOR.** The choice of contractor is largely based on the construction documents prepared by the architect, so be sure to take the architect's opinion into consideration when making this choice.

**GET YOUR ARCHITECT ON BOARD RIGHT AWAY.** Congregations sometimes wait too long to contact an architect. These professionals can give good advice on items such as zoning, utilities, land purchases and more, early in the process.

**HELP THE ARCHITECT UNDERSTAND YOUR CONGREGATION.** Invite your architect to attend worship. The architect can best accommodate your needs if he or she grasps the concepts of your worship and what occurs in your building.

**LET THE CONGREGATION MEET THE ARCHITECT.** Plan an all-congregation meeting with the architect. Let him or her present the building process, with support from building committee members. Ask for feedback from parishioners in writing.

**TIMELINES KEEP YOUR PROJECT ON TRACK.** It is important to discuss the timing of the project. Be sure to target a completion date. Without these aspects, the project could linger.



## ARCHITECTURAL SERVICES AVAILABLE INCLUDE:

### Project Administration and Management

- Disciplines coordination/documents checking
- Schedule development/monitoring of the work
- Construction management

### Evaluation and Planning Services

- Existing facilities surveys
- Site analysis, selection and development planning
- On-site and off-site utility studies
- Zoning process assistance

### Design Services

- Architectural design/documentation
- Structural design/documentation
- Mechanical design/documentation
- Electrical design/documentation
- Civil design/documentation
- Landscape design/documentation
- Interior design/documentation

### Bidding or Negotiation Services

- Bid evaluation
- Contract award

### Contract Administration Services

- Full-time, on-site project representative
- Testing and inspection administration
- Furniture and equipment installation administration

adapted from *You and Your Architect*

**THE ARCHITECT'S SERVICES DON'T STOP WHEN CONSTRUCTION BEGINS.** Your architect should continue to take an active role in your project, even after the construction phase begins. He or she can work closely with the contractor, evaluate the work, make necessary design changes and inspect the completed facility.

### COMMUNICATION IS THE KEY TO A SUCCESSFUL PROJECT.

Communication is a must. Talk about the vision of the project, get ideas from congregation staff and members, let everyone know why time and money is being spent, ask for clarification of architectural and building terms, and don't hesitate to ask questions if anything is unclear. Leaders need to have a strong voice if the project is to reflect the congregation's values, needs and personality.

**CLEAR RESPONSIBILITIES SHOULD BE DEFINED.** All parties of the building project have specific and important jobs. These functions and expectations need to be clearly outlined and understood.

**BEWARE OF FALSE EXPECTATIONS.** A new or remodeled facility will not get the congregation more involved in ministry, cause them to give more in contributions or automatically increase attendance.

## Resources You Can Use

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For resources on this subject, check out the Congregational Resource Guide (CRG) at <http://thecrg.org/>. Suggested CRG search terms: building issues, architects, building design, selecting architects.

Information for this piece provided by many sources, including local congregational leaders and architects, as well as the articles "Selecting an Architect" from the American Institute of Architects website, "Working with an Architect" from Charles Anderson Architects in Seattle, WA and "What You Should Know About Working With an Architect" from the Jeffrey K. Abrams Architect website.

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**Working with Architects** is part of the Using Resources series, which is published by the Center for Congregations to help congregations make effective use of specific kinds of resources. It is our hope that you will find this information useful in your work as a congregation.

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