

NEW YORK STATE Architects Consumer Information

What You Should Know About Architects and Their Services

What is an architect, and what services do they offer?

An architect licensed and registered in New York provides services related to the design and construction of buildings and the spaces around them, where the safeguarding of life, health, property, and public welfare is concerned. These design and construction services typically include the following:

- consultation
- evaluation
- planning
- preliminary studies
- designs
- construction documents and management
- administration of construction contracts

Who may use the title "Architect" and provide architectural services?

To use the title "Architect" in New York State, an individual must be licensed and registered by the New York State Education Department.

Architectural services may be provided by a sole practitioner, a professional service corporation (PC), a professional service limited liability company (PLLC), a registered limited liability partnership (LLP), or a professional partnership (all partners must be licensed). With few exceptions, no other types of businesses may offer architectural services.

What credentials does a New York licensed architect have?

A New York licensed and registered architect has completed a combination of 12 years of education/experience credit and then passed the 33 1/2 hour national architecture licensing examination. While it is possible to be admitted to that exam on the basis of work experience alone, 90% of New York's architects have a minimum of a four-year bachelor's degree. Many architects also have a Master of Architecture degree.

When would I use the services of an architect?

You might retain an architect to:

- evaluate a house's structural integrity and mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems.
- design a new home or to design an addition to an existing home.
- design the water and sewerage systems, storm drainage facility, and/or layout for a housing development or other tract of land.
- assist in the development of a property.

Architects design all types of buildings - the actual structure, the interiors, and the land around them.

When must I employ an architect licensed and registered in New York?

Generally, you will need the services of a licensed and registered design professional such as an architect any time you need the approval of a government agency or official for a construction project; these officials can only accept architectural plans and specifications signed and stamped with the seal of the architect. Check with that official to determine what you are required to submit. You will also need an architect when the complexity of the design of a project requires the skills of an architect or when the services fall within the legal definition of architecture.

What should I expect as a client of an architect?

You should expect to be provided with the following:

- proof of the architect's qualifications, including proof of licensure and registration in New York;
- names of former clients as references;
- a clear and complete description of the services to be provided and the work that will be done;
- a project schedule and the related fees; and
- final plans and specifications that contain the signature and seal of the architect.

You may choose to limit your contract to project planning and preliminary architectural design services only, or you may extend your contract to include the preparation of construction documents, construction observation and inspection services.

You may also request that the architect provide "as-built" drawings of the finished project..

What can I do to ensure a good professional relationship with my architect?

Work *with* your architect. Make your requirements known as clearly and as thoroughly as possible, so your architect can design to suit both your budget and your needs. If you are uncertain about anything, ask questions.

Make sure you have a written contract that accurately reflects the following:

- a description of the work to be done;
- a project schedule;
- the amount and terms of payment of the architect's fees;
- the responsibilities of the people who are signing the contract;
- a description of the project deliverables, including plans and specifications; and
- a description of the architect's involvement with filing a project with building officials and other authorities having jurisdiction.

What questions should individuals with disabilities ask about accessing services?

Ask such questions as whether the service location is physically accessible (curb cuts, ramps, restrooms, etc.) as well as whether there is a Telecommunication Device for the Deaf (TDD) and parking for people with disabilities. If necessary, ask the architect to come and meet with you.

How do I locate an architect?

Check with friends and colleagues who have used an architect's services; you may also look under "Architects" in the yellow pages of your phone book. In addition, professional organizations representing architects may be able to identify their members who specialize in your area of need.

The State Board for Architecture *cannot* refer you to a particular licensee. Make sure your architect is licensed and registered in New York.

Verifying a New York license:

New York architects must display a current New York registration certificate; this certificate lists the professional's name, address, and dates of the registration period. Architects must reregister every three years to practice in New York. Some professionals also display their original New York license, diploma, licenses from other states, and membership certificates. You may [verify an individual's license and registration](#) on this site.