

Project Preparation Package

Part 1 - Preparing for Your Design Project

Welcome

Your first step to your dream project



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Thank you for downloading our PPP, your “Project Preparation Package.” I prepared this guide after seeing so many people struggle with understanding the design and building process, and not knowing where to start.

A new building project can seem like a complex and frightening roadblock for those who haven’t been through it before. You may be wondering - will my project get approved? How much time will it take? What should it look like? How much will it cost? What are the key and critical steps I need to take to ensure that my entire project is a success? In the following installments you will discover the answers to these questions, and more.

By simply reviewing this document you will be leaps ahead of 99% of new builders, and will be able to save yourself from crucial mistakes often made early in the architectural design and construction process.

I hope you enjoy this guide and look forward to your feedback on the contents.

Sincerely yours,



JACOB BEK, RA LEED AP

Project Preparation Package

Part 1 - Preparing for Your Design Project

Part 2 - Finding Your Architect

Part 3 - When to Make Decisions

Part 4 - The Design Process

Part 5 - Next Steps

Do your homework

How to prepare for your design project

How to create a design brief before engaging an architect.

Renovating your home, business, or building any new project can and should be a very exciting process. However too often we hear stories of clients not having their needs heard and misunderstandings between contractors, clients, and architects. Often there can be confusion in the agreed scope of work or lack of clarity in exactly what was included in a particular contract. This confusion can come from all sides, be frustrating for all parties, and can eventually lead to the detriment of your project design, schedule, and budget.

I have decided to do something about it.

It all comes down to the brief.

A good working relationship with your architect is based on open and honest communication. This starts with a comprehensive project brief that helps your architect understand your expectations, preferences, wants, needs, aspirations and lifestyle. If the brief is not clear, the architect, and later the contractor, will struggle to understand what it is they need to allow for in the design, scope and pricing of your project.

Really think about your brief and consider all aspects of it.

This document will help you cover critical aspects of a design brief.

Let's get started...



*Charles and Ray Eames sketch, *What is a House*, 1954

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Your Site

Really scrutinize your site and get a true feel for it. Regardless if you're renovating in the city, or building a new home in the country, start by considering the following:

Where is the sun in summer and winter?

Where are the views you want to enjoy every day and those you want to exclude?

Where are the surrounding houses, other buildings and trees you may or may not want to see?

Which parts of the site are most and least to be noisy?

Does the site slope?

Put in a file to share with your architect all the information you have about the site (legal paperwork/covenants, existing plans or previous site information).

Spaces - Indoor

A good design can transform the way that we live. Think hard about your family's or business's current and future needs. Map out your daily routine. How many people live or work in the space. How old are they? Who does what, where? Don't forget to consider your changing needs. What may your project require in the

future? Do you want separated 'zoned' spaces or to allow for more flexible use and functions? Consider the number of floors, rooms, and other spaces. Describe their use. Make a list of who needs rooms to sleep, work and relax in. Is your lifestyle formal, casual, relaxed or active? Do you need spaces to entertain indoors and/or outdoors? What method of heating do you want? List any special requirements you have - i.e. accessibility, extra storage areas, built in furniture or shelving, elevators, ventilation, privacy, acoustic requirements, etc.

Spaces - Outdoor

Do you have outdoor space, a garden or terrace? If so, what do you want to do outdoors? Entertain? Relax? Play? Swim? Supervise children? Grow enough vegetables to be self-sufficient? Do you want a high or low maintenance scheme? Are there noise restrictions? What features are important to you? Think about the indoor/outdoor flow of spaces, where the morning sun lands, where it's exposed to and sheltered from the wind. Have you always dreamt of an exterior fireplace? Think of your external areas as outdoor rooms, and consider privacy and connections between spaces. Listing your requirements will help both you and your architect quickly understand your priorities.

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Design Mood and Feeling

This is important. As architects, we cater our design aesthetics to your needs and tastes. Think about the ‘feel’ of your project, do you want it to be bold, low-key, industrial, traditional, minimalist, contemporary or organic? Think about you want to feel in your space. For example, what is your favorite time of day? Do you worry about shutting the curtains consistently for privacy, or do you like to enjoy coffee on the terrace? Is curling up with a good book your favorite hobby, or is it taking the dog for a walk no matter what the weather? Describe spaces, design features and styles that appeal to you and those that don’t. You could create a ‘mood board’ or scrapbook of fabric swatches, photographs, magazine clippings and anything else that can help your architect understand who you are, how you live and what you want from your project. Use web-based photo sites to assemble and share your ideas.

The Details

List major appliances you already own or are considering buying and any preferences you have about where you want to put them. Do you really want that American fridge next to your double steam oven? Do you have lots of gadgets that need sockets in your island unit? Is your washing machine on 24/7 and do you want your drying and ironing space right next to it? These details can make a big difference to the way your kitchen and utility space is planned. Note major pieces of furniture or artwork you want to showcase so your architect can provide spaces and out-

lets for them in the new plans. Better to include it in your planning from day one, than to move in and wonder where you are going to hang your Picasso.

Sketching

Sketch out your thoughts, but don’t become too wedded to them. Do not be bashful, napkin sketches do the trick. If the work involves altering an existing house or interior, you’ll be constrained by existing structures and services. If it’s a new house, let your imagination flow, but be prepared for your architect to suggest other approaches. That is, after all, why you are hiring one!

Materials

List materials you like and dislike (inside and out), but be aware that your budget will be a determining factor in your final choice. Do you have any specific wall, ceiling and floor finishes in mind? Do you prefer a minimalist look of rendered white plaster, or a warmer feeling of timber or colors? Stone, slate, rubber, glass, steel, aluminium all have a very personal, physical, and sentimental association. The list is endless. Much will depend on the style of building, but there are choices to be made that will determine how much you spend up front, and how much you spend on maintenance in the longer term.

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Sustainability and Energy Efficiency

Regulation and rising energy costs are making sustainable 'green' design an essential consideration rather than a 'nice to have' design feature. There are now minimum requirements set by national and local municipalities. Your architect will know all about these and will discuss with you how 'green' you want to and can be. There are lots of renewable energy solutions - solar panels, ground source heat pumps, rainwater harvesting to name but a few. Although these can add costs up front, they can save you money in the long term. Much will depend on your budget and how long you plan to live in the building after the work has been done.

Timetable

Think about and share with your architect key target dates that are important to you. When do you want to start and finish the project? Bear in mind that it could take anywhere from a few months to over a year to agree the final design scheme, obtain planning permission and building department approvals, and prepare construction drawings before building work can commence. This timetable can vary depending on many factors - size, complexity, code or city restrictions, condo or co-op board approval, and decision making and sign-offs just to name a few. You are less likely to be disappointed if you are realistic about your design and construction schedule. Consider the design of your project could take anywhere from 3 to 6 months for an interior renovation, 6 to 12 months for an addition or larger scale renovation, or 12+ months

for new construction. Your architect should provide you with a comprehensive design schedule included in his or her proposal. If this is not included, mandate it. Your contractor should provide you with a comprehensive construction schedule included in his or her project bid.

Budget

We can discuss several typical cost plans for different types of projects. This varies depending on the size and type of project. Be honest with your architect and set a realistic budget for your project early on in the design process. This can save you cost and time in the long run. More on this topic to come.

Lastly, have a conversation with yourself. Keep asking yourself, why you want what it is you say you want. Slowly elaborate your brief in more and more detail. Do not hesitate to include the emotional aspects, as this is the overriding deeper reasoning behind what you want your design project to become.

Make lists and write ideas down. Save pictures, example projects, or articles you find interesting or inspiring. Make note of materials, colors, fixtures, or furnishings you like.

Do not be passive. The more information you can communicate to your architect and design team, the better they can cater your design specifically for you. Honesty, good communication, and transparency inevitably produce the best design projects.