

THE VALUE OF YOUR ARCHITECT

Today, I'd like to talk about what you perceive as value when hiring an architect. Especially in these challenging economic times, it is essential you understand what your architect brings to your project and what you are paying for. As many home builders, developers, and designers can attest, not all architects are the same. The first challenge for anyone hiring an architect is having the knowledge about how to *choose* an architect, and how to understand the value that particular architect brings to the table..



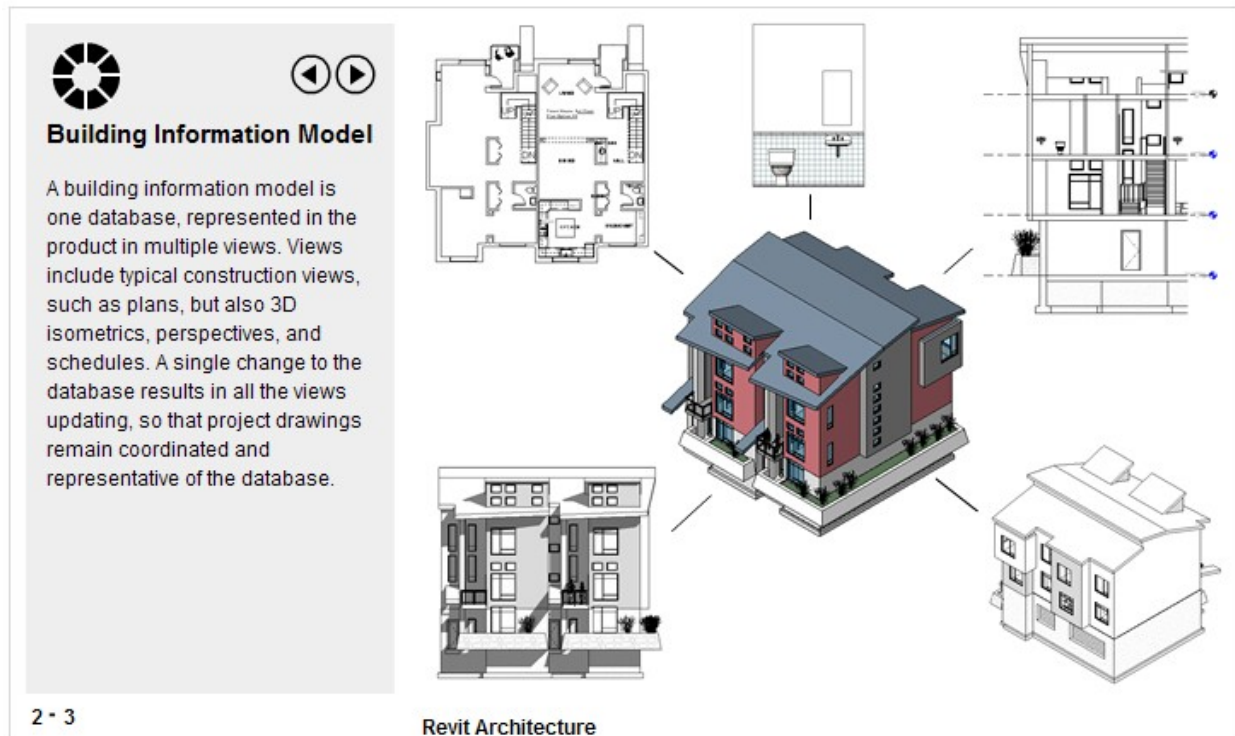
BUDGET, BUDGET, BUDGET

A lot of things can get out of hand or go wrong when building. The list is too numerous to mention in one short paper but, at least keep in mind that not all architects are created equal. When you remember that important nugget, your wallet will be much happier.

An overbloated budget

Several things can add to a budget gone bad. Delay in construction, material selection, etc. are just a couple of possible reasons but, having an experienced architect who has worked within strict budget constraints before can minimize the chances of budget bloating. Timeline is as valuable as any physical element in your building project. You definitely want an architect who

respects your time and partners with reliable contractors to get the project done correctly the first time. Also, your architect should arm you with budget and design questions before you even get started. This efficient use of everyone's time is essential to meeting that all-important budget.



IT CAN BE TECHNICAL

It is imperative that the architect you choose brings with them the most updated set of technical skills. Not only does this provide you with clear visuals, it assures you that your architect possesses the capabilities that will keep your building process efficient and affordable.

Possessing The Skills

Ask whether your architect is using the latest available design tools, such as Building Information Modeling (BIM) software. This is a big piece of the budget puzzle because, as mentioned above in the graphic, BIM helps to organize your project's information and coordinates changes throughout every single view. It also provides the architect with essential building information BEFORE you find yourself out in the field. There's a lot to coordinate when designing a building. If there's something that gets changed that is not fully tracked, a very expensive mistake can happen.



WORKING PARTNERSHIPS

Having an architect who has good, solid relationships with the other project partners cannot be emphasized enough. This trusting, established back and forth between architect and contractor has the ability to streamline your building experience in time saving measures and material costs.

Possessing The Skills

A building project can get quite delayed if your architect has not made the contractor part of the early design process. Rather than planning in a vacuum with the clients, an experienced architect has the confidence to bring the contractor in early, to address any potential problems or questions. This will save you serious money in the end.

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FLEXIBILITY and EXPERIENCE

Does a small, streamlined architectural firm always mean flexibility? No, not always...but, often it does. The state of the economy has given birth to a growing landscape of independent architects and designers who have moved on from larger firms. The trick to finding the right one who will handle your project with integrity and professionalism may not be all that easy.

Work and Experience Speaking For Itself

So, when you are at the point of choosing your architect, it's smart to get one who has many of the attributes mentioned above. Let's go over them. Small in size, experience with medium to large residential and commercial projects, technical skill, budget accountability, reliable, solid relationships with contractors, and an overall personality that is flexible and professional.



Toner Architects truly wants you to be happy with your building project and welcomes any of your questions. Remember to have a look at the architect's past projects, get referrals, and understand your architect's process. In the end, you have to feel comfortable and confident in your architect. Your budget, design sensibilities, and project's sustainability relies on that very important choice.

See you at the drafting table,

Ian Toner