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## Architecturally speaking

Consider what licensed professionals bring to the construction process

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When planning a new home or renovating your existing one, do you need the services an architect?

A licensed architect must obtain undergraduate and graduate degrees followed by three years of intense internship before passing the Architectural Registration Exam. It takes seven to nine years to become licensed. Comparatively, no formal education or license is required to become a residential designer.

Regardless of architect or designer, the individual you hire should be passionately committed to being your advocate, according to Michael Morse, president/principal of Raleigh-based M2 Architecture. This person should be highly motivated to supply non-arbitrary designs, while providing the highest level of service within your budgetary restraints. A good architect understands that productive business is based on establishing healthy, rewarding relationships between all parties: You, the general contractor, sub-contractors, consultants and peripheral members of the team, such as blueprint company staff. The architect orchestrates the teamwork, representing your interests to ensure that the best possible end results.

In North Carolina, having a licensed architect is not required for a residential building permit. Therefore, some wonder if these services are worth the money. "In many cases, money is actually saved by working with an architect," says Morse. "As the client's eyes and ears, the architect utilizes professional knowledge/expertise to ensure the home or addition is built correctly. This entails exploring the client's ideas regarding the desired look and needed functionality and offering solutions to get there. Throughout this process, a good architect often finds ways to decrease

construction costs and ongoing maintenance costs. In hiring an architect, you're in essence handing this individual say, \$250,000 for an addition, and entrusting him to use it wisely. If you hire a designer without the professional qualifica-

narios, Morse notes. For example, although many architects enjoy projects with "out of the box" ideas, a good architect will question clients as to their expected longevity in their home if they have highly unique requests, keeping re-sale

client's personal expression and lifestyle. Good design doesn't have to mean more expensive design. The architect should bring a clean slate to each project, working with the construction team to deliver unprecedented value for the client's

many projects to go more smoothly than they otherwise might have. Michael takes a holistic view of each project, asking the clients about long term goals. It may be that certain elements of a future project can be worked into the current project, saving the client money and stress down the road. Clients appreciate working with him. A good architect is a great asset in the building process."

Rick Lounsberry, owner of soon-to-open D.P. Dough in Mission Valley Plaza, agrees with Frelke's comments. "Michael has been an essential part of the process in getting the space ready for my calzone shop to open," says Lounsberry. "I don't know how I would have navigated the waters without him. I met him through the owners of my building, and he's been the liaison between me and all of the contractors involved in renovating the space. Although I have drafting experience and knew to some degree what was needed, Michael has been the visionary and the leader in bringing everything to fruition."

To have an expert managing the construction process from start to finish, providing checks and balances along the way to ensure you get an ideal final product certainly sounds like the way to go. To work with someone passionate about design form and function makes the decision even sweeter.

Morse has worked in the architectural/construction industry for more than 25 years; the past 20 in the Triangle, and serving as M2 Architecture, pllc president/principal for the past six. His portfolio includes well over 250 residential projects, which comprise approximately 30 percent of the company's work; commercial and amenity building design encompass the majority of the remainder.

For more information, e-mail [m2architecture@yahoo.com](mailto:m2architecture@yahoo.com).



This residential clubhouse by M2 Architecture features a heavy timber vernacular style of construction.

tions or experience to accomplish the job, you're making a poor investment. Reducing costs by going with a less expensive but less qualified designer is not the place to try to save money. If you buy a \$3,000 suit off the rack, don't you pay the extra \$100 to get it tailored? If you spend \$1,000,000 on a home, shouldn't you be willing to pay an additional fee to make sure it's designed and built correctly?"

An architect enhances the building process in a multitude of sce-

value in mind. On the other hand, an architect can help owners think beyond the traditional when their plans are long term and they aren't concerned with pleasing the status quo.

"An architect should respect that each client's project is the most important project in their world," says Morse. "A project shouldn't be a platform to showcase design abilities through a self-satisfying exercise in ego. Instead, it's an opportunity to tailor a design to the

investment."

Wake County Licensed General Contractor Doug Frelke of Frelke Revised has worked with M2 Architecture on several projects. "I've wondered myself if we've needed an architect on some projects," says Frelke. "If the architect is Michael Morse, the answer is yes. He's been an invaluable part of our team. Michael has an excellent construction background. This expertise, combined with his design abilities and communication skills, has allowed