

Working with Architects



Overview

In an effort to provide the best possible value, we have compiled this information for our clients to use as a resource when working with both an architect and Castle Building & Remodeling on their project. This handout is prefaced by saying that we understand that not all architects are the same. We will talk in broad generalizations based on the combined experiences of Castle's employees, present and past, and their interactions with clients and architects over the past 30 years. Architects work under different fee structures/business models and have a broad and varying level of experience. The generalizations made are based on the typical business model architects are taught, which advocates that an architect first design spaces and specify products and then obtain three or more bids for the project. Lastly, it is not our intent to dissuade you from using an architect. Our intention is to help you have the best design/build experience you can.

The Differences between Architects and Design/Build Remodelers

The main differences between architects and Design/Build Remodelers focus on how the budget for the project is determined and when the budget is first discussed. At Castle Building & Remodeling, budget is discussed at the first conversation, during the first visit, and while working with our designer when the project scope or idea is locked down. After the first visit, a Budget Estimate is completed that includes details on what was discussed and the costs broken down by project components (such as the addition, kitchen, master bath, and main floor ¾ bath) and a range of project costs such as \$30,000 to \$40,000. A range is given because the actual scope of work is still to be determined and product selections have not been made.

Typically, architects will meet with clients and discuss the wants and needs of the client, but are much more reluctant to discuss the costs of a potential project because they are not builders and do not complete the work. Architects also have more of a tendency to approach each project as a unique piece of art. Costs often become an afterthought to the design, which in our experience is not reality for many clients. The worst case scenario in this model is that a client falls in love with the design but has no idea what it costs. When the costs are calculated, it is so far outside of the range the client expects that the disappointment is tremendous and the process is disappointing. Often when costs are discussed with the architect, they are based on general costs per square foot, which are quite unreliable and can vary widely depending on the room itself, what is in the room, and the finishes selected.

Billing Differences

Another major difference between Design/Build Remodelers and most architects is how each group bills for their time. Most architects bill for their time on an hourly basis. This method does not encourage a speedy process and can lead to billing surprises and animosity. In contrast, Castle Building & Remodeling and many Design/Build Remodelers charge for design services at a flat pre-determine rate. For instance, Castle Building & Remodeling will give a bid to complete each portion of a project with a fixed cost. Here is an example below for a whole house remodeling project:

| Whole House Design & Planning Fees | | | | |
|---|------|-----------|-------------|----------------------|
| Type of Work | Time | Rate | Total | Total Projected Cost |
| Measure and draw existing plans | 12 | \$ 104.00 | \$ 1,248.00 | \$ 1,248.00 |
| Draw conceptual plans | 24 | \$ 104.00 | \$ 2,496.00 | \$ 3,744.00 |
| Preliminary planning stage | 29 | \$ 104.00 | \$ 3,016.00 | \$ 6,760.00 |
| Final planning stage | 26 | \$ 104.00 | \$ 2,704.00 | \$ 9,464.00 |
| Estimating stage | 24 | \$ 74.00 | \$ 1,776.00 | \$ 9,464.00 |
| Interior Design | 16 | \$ 74.00 | \$ 1,184.00 | \$ 10,648.00 |
| Structural Engineer | 5 | \$ 104.00 | \$ 520.00 | \$ 11,168.00 |
| Total Design & Planning Fees | | | | \$ 11,168.00 |

In addition to charging a flat rate, most Design/Build Remodelers charge significantly less for designing the same project. By utilizing a team of experts who are not necessarily licensed architects and defraying some of the costs to the construction process, Design/Build Remodelers are able to offer a similar experience at a significantly better value. For example, the project above is for a whole house remodeling project with a large rear two-story kitchen and master suite addition that was approximately \$300,000. Most architects will charge in the range of 10% - 12% of project costs for their services (generally higher if they include project management) vs. 4%-6% generally charged by Castle Building & Remodeling. The team approach that Castle and other Design/Build Remodelers utilizes allows a draftsman to do the "As Built" drawings and proposed floor plans, an interior designer to review the layout and help with product selections and finishes, and a structural engineer to size the beams and structural members. Throughout this process the same software is used and electronic plan files are shared between members of the team, eliminating redundant drawings and chances for errors.

The real question is how a Design/Build Remodeler is able to offer a similar experience to an architect for a much better value. The answer really is that the Design/Build Remodeler wants to build the project, not just design it. By charging a flat rate and defraying some of the costs to the production of the project, a Design/Build Remodeler has an incentive to design to a realistic budget so that the project will happen and the investment made in the design process can be recouped. In contrast, architects who are paid by the hour have little incentive to design to a budget and actually benefits from the process of drawing, re-drawing, and re-drawing plans again as the project shrinks back down towards feasibility. It has been our observation and general industry knowledge

that a relatively small percentage of architect-drawn plans actually get built in comparison to the Design/Build model.

Here is what one of Castle Building & Remodeling's clients had to say about her experience with an architect and the design process before and after choosing to work with Castle.

Testimonial

- A past Castle client says, "I found my experience of working with an Architect to be inefficient and an unpleasant experience. The architect was not realistic about the design scope and my budget which led to many revisions and re-drawing of the plans. This added design costs and was frustratingly slow. I found the Design/Build Process that Castle Building & Remodeling used was much more convenient and predictable than working with an Architect."

How Castle Building & Remodeling Works with Architects

Castle Building & Remodeling does have several architects that are utilized on larger or more complex projects as a part of the Castle design team. When Castle brings in an architect, the Design/Build model is followed and your budget and design requirements are considered from the start.

Here are some basic guidelines we try to follow to help improve our clients' experiences when plans are brought in from an outside architect.

1. We like to get involved early to help keep the design realistic and on budget and to maximize the client's investment in the architect's design time.
2. Upon review of a set of conceptual plans and a walk-through of the house, a budget estimate will be completed at no cost. This Budget Estimate is used as a litmus test to ensure that the plans and your budget are realistic.
3. If this budget estimate sounds doable and you would like to work with Castle Building & Remodeling, we ask that you make a small commitment to go to the next step in the design process.
4. We are professionals and, as such, need to be paid for our Interior Designer's time in researching product selections and helping our clients in making final selections. Our unique showroom is well suited for making selections and seeing many items together to simplify the selection process (not most Architect's strong suit). This step helps Castle Building & Remodeling recommend products that we are familiar with from suppliers with which we are accustomed to working that fit our clients' budgets.
5. As the final details are locked down, the specifications that were created by the architect (usually generic) need to be made real for the project and transferred to Castle Building & Remodeling's PurpleSoft Estimating system in order to be converted to our extremely detailed line-item estimate. Trade Partners need to be met at the site to walk through the home with the plans and specifications so that an accurate bid can be obtained and a line-item estimate can be created. In contrast, most builders that architects prefer to recommend will skip this step and simply bid based on square footage. This is a recipe for disaster in older homes

- and leads to more animosity and surprises when the project costs go up wildly as the job progresses. Castle Building & Remodeling averages less than 2% of sales from Change Orders, with about half of this amount being requested by the client – not due to a surprise or, more commonly, dictated by an inspector.
6. The investment Castle Building & Remodeling asks potential clients to make in completing the selection process and creating a detailed line-item estimate is typically in the range of .75% to 1% of project costs. Castle Building & Remodeling will not complete free estimates and does not believe that this is a system that delivers value or a positive experience to clients.

Recap

To recap, our intention is not to dissuade potential clients from working with or to discontinue their relationship with an architect, but simply to help each client have the best experience possible. It is Castle's goal that after reading this, our clients understand the major differences in philosophy between architects and Design/Build Remodelers. It is also our intention to convey the differences in value delivered and efficiency of the processes. Last, Castle Building & Remodeling welcomes clients who have hired an architect to create plans and completes multiple projects each year that are designed by architects.