

Architectural Services

Art Form Architecture, Inc. is pleased to offer a variety of services. We believe strongly that anyone who needs or wants the help of a professional Architect should be able to get it, whether the project is small or large, and whether your taste is basic or extravagant. If you don't see what you need here, please feel free to call us.

The House Call

The House Call is 4 hour design session, with your full participation. It's offered as a stand-alone service, and as the first stage in a full project. Please see the House Call Brochure for more information.

Schematic Estimates

This is an add-on service to the House Call. We prepare an estimate for you based on the House Call sketches and additional information we gather by interviewing you about your likely finish choices. It's designed to help you make decisions about the project and can also be used to obtain financing. Depending on your needs, it can be as detailed as you need. Usually a two page estimate that combines square footage costs with more refined costs for the windows, kitchen, finishes, etc, is both sufficient and cost effective at this stage.

The cost will vary with the size of the project and the detail required for the estimate. If you think you will be interested in this, please let us know before we come for your House Call, as we usually need to schedule an extra hour to gather the required information.

We have several methods of producing the Schematic Estimate. These include our Builder Partner program, independent professional estimating, and our own in-house estimating.

The Builder Partner program brings a Quality Builder onto the team immediately after the House Call. They provide the Schematic Estimate and then provide updated costs as the design is refined. In the Builder Partner program the Construction Contract follows a Construction Management model, which is not competitively bid to multiple Builders. See the section called The Builder Partner program for a more in depth discussion.

The second method, professional estimating, is recommended for those who will want to competitively bid the project to more than one Builder. The cost of this estimate is higher, but the benefits of a reliable and truly independent estimate are multiple. Our estimator is both an active builder and the owner/developer of estimating software. Their estimates are thorough and their costs are current.

The third method, our in-house estimating, is both the least cost and the least exact. Why? Architects don't purchase materials daily, and bid to subcontractors daily. It's simply a fact of life that those most directly involved in construction on a daily basis have the knowledge and ability to produce the most accurate estimates. We only recommend our in-house estimating for those with more leeway in their budget.

Contract Documents - Completing the Design and Drawings

This is the next step after the House Call, with or without the Schematic Estimate. We work out any remaining design issues or design changes with you, and prepare drawings suitable for obtaining a building permit and for the Builder to use in construction. See The Art Form Architecture Design and Construction Process for a more in depth description.

Bid and Construction Phase Services

Once you have your drawings, some people need or want help hiring a Builder (Bid Phase Services) and/or guidance during construction (Construction Phase Services).

Bid Phase Services include assistance interviewing Builders, reviewing their completed projects and checking their references. This service can range from primarily do-it-yourself steps, using our guidance along with forms and worksheets we provide to full service. Please note – whether or not you choose to have us participate in this phase, we strongly urge you to have an attorney review the Construction Contract and your insurance agent or attorney review the Builder's insurance certificates.

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Construction Phase Services include reviewing the Builders work at appropriate stages, reviewing submittals where appropriate (submittals might include additional drawings for cabinet work, or specification sheets for alternate materials), and reviewing their payment requests.

When you have us participate in both the Bid and Construction phases, our assistance is designed to help protect your financial interests. We review the Contract for accountability between scheduled payments and the work that will be complete when the payments are due, discuss any language the Builder includes that describes or modifies the work shown on the drawings, and the contractual issues surrounding deposits. Once construction begins we review the work each time a payment is due to make sure that the progress on site is in line with the payments being made. Towards the end of the project, we help you work out Punch List items with the Builder, so that you are in a financial position to make sure any problems get corrected, but are also not holding back such a large sum that relations with the Builder are strained.

If you decide to start with our assistance, you are not obligated to continue. We've had projects where we helped with the Contract and the beginning of construction, and the Owners then felt they had learned the issues and the process well enough to continue on their own – and did so with good results.

If you start off without our assistance during these phases, and later have difficulties, we will do our best to make ourselves available. We generally give first priority to those who are current and active clients. But if you have a problem that requires immediate attention, we will do our absolute best to get to you quickly, no matter how long ago we did the drawings. In addition to our own expertise, we maintain open accounts with several Structural and Civil Engineers, a professional estimator, and legal professionals who can provide the appropriate expertise if needed.

Renderings

We offer a range of computer renderings, all generated from a 3D model of the project. Once we have the model constructed, you can sit with us to select the exact view or views you want – both interior and exterior. Then you choose the type of rendering you want.

Line Drawings – These are the fastest and least cost. They are suitable for use in black and white, non-photo, promotional material, and are also used by other Designers and Architects as the basis for watercolor or colored pencil hand renderings.

Color Rendering – These are still relatively fast and a moderate cost. They show the materials in color with the surfaces shaded. They can include sun shadows for a specific time and day if desired. If a suitable photograph is available, they can show the surrounding site fairly accurately. They are suitable for use in color promotional material and are also used by other Architects and Designers as the basis for watercolor or colored pencil hand renderings.

Ray Trace Renderings – These are the most time consuming, the most expensive and the most photorealistic. They always include sun shadows for a specific time and day, as well as reflections, and lighting effects. Site context is always shown, from a photo of the actual site if available, as well as realistic new plantings, cars, people and other effects to bring your project to life. This is usually used as the final presentation product.

RE Consultation

It's not uncommon in New England for there to be no suitable lot for new construction in your chosen area, and no house for sale that really meets your needs. Depending on scheduling and location, we can often provide an abbreviated version of the House Call to help you evaluate one or more properties, and show you the possibilities before you make an offer. We have the technical training to advise you clearly on which structural changes are possible and/or economical. Three years of House Calls (well over a hundred), have given us a unique ability to quickly assess and sketch the possibilities. We use a combination of photos, sketches, and laser measurements to quickly gather the required data for off-property sketching if necessary. The minimum session is 2 hours for \$300. You should allow at least a half an hour per property, plus any travel time between properties. Please note that this service is not a Home Inspection, which is a separate service with its own licensing and insurance.

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Condominium Conversions

Many people don't realize that Architects can provide the required measured drawings of an existing building for Condo Conversions. From a surveyor or engineer, you usually only get the required technical drawings, as 2D drawings. When we do the same drawings, we are preparing them as a 3D computer model. We can then provide you with "dollhouse" floor overviews, interior and exterior perspectives, and other 3D images that help you market and sell the Condominiums. Only an Architect can add the sizzle!

Variance, Special Permit and Historic District applications

Very often, if a Variance, Special Permit or Historic District approval is needed, you are in the position of paying to have a project developed that you may not receive permission to build. When we prepare these drawings for you, we work with you to do only the amount of design work necessary to ensure the greatest likelihood of approval, and to ensure that you are submitting plans that meet your needs. For instance, if you need Historic District approval to change the locations of windows, we design the interior in sketch form; to be sure we place the windows correctly, and only do a "finished" set of drawings for the official submittal.

Development Packages

We work hand in hand with your Civil Engineers or other professionals to provide you with the best possible design and presentation. We have the capability to import your surveyor's topographical survey, either from hand or CAD drawings, and generate a 3 dimensions computer model of the property. From there, we begin by showing the proposed structures as basic massing models, a method that allows you to quickly study multiple options in 3D. We then use a combination of massing models and fully developed computer models to represent your completed project.

The final model can be as basic as massing studies of the new structures, and as complete as a photorealistic view down one of the new streets, with trees, houses, cars, kids and dogs. A top down view can show the planning board the shadows your new project will cast, by day and time. When a good photo is available, we can show the view corridors through your project to the water or mountains beyond.

In short, there's a lot of value to be added by bringing the Architect onto the project early in the development process. We're available to provide you with both design solutions and presentations drawings that will help you get your project approved.