Introduction to

Architecture

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INTRODUCTION

Architecture is an imaginative and creative blend of science and art in the design of different environments for people. Around the world, people need not only places to live, but also to work, eat and play.

Architects transform these environments into concepts and then develop those concepts into images for buildings that others can construct based on those ideas. Architectural projects can be as small and restricted as an entryway or as large as an entire university campus. They can also span the possibility of everything in between.

Architects are not only responsible for designing concepts, but they also serve in a leadership role that brings together budgetary and design requirements established by a client. These requirements can include the site where the building is to be constructed, needs of the individuals who will use the building and limitations regarding materials. Creativity, team leadership and decision making are also critical elements of successful architecture.

Overall, an architect is a licensed professional who has developed specialized skills for the purpose of designing buildings and making the visions of their clients a reality.

This guide will introduce you to the architectural profession, including the various practice areas and help you to understand how to best prepare for a lucrative and exciting career as an architect.

CHAPTER 1
What is Architecture?

Architecture is a blend of both science and art, used in the design of structures and buildings. In a much wider scope, architecture includes the design of a complete environment, from landscape architecture to the complete planning of a town. Decision making, problem solving, team leadership and creativity are all extremely important in the process of taking a design idea and developing it into a physical reality.

Architects are responsible for the design of buildings. Part of that activity includes the creation of drawings, scale models, writing specifications, letters and other documents. Architects may also manage or supervise architectural projects as well.

Generally, architects do not have a role in the construction of the buildings they design. That task is typically handled by construction contractors. In some cases architects may perform construction if they are employed in a design-build company. Architects may also develop projects on their own or sometimes in conjunction with real estate developers or other professionals.

While architects are commonly associated with the design of buildings, in reality they do much more than this. Some architects may act as consultants in the fields of relocation planning, business planning, interior design, space-use planning, human resources, facility maintenance programming and much more.

Numerous other professions also work with architects on building projects, including civil engineers, structural engineers, mechanical engineers, landscape architects, acoustical specialists, cost experts, interior designers, lighting designers, photographers, artists, facility managers, city planners, land developers, regional planners, sociologists, real estate firms and many more.

In most cases, architects respond to requests for proposals that are published by public and private clients. This is one way in which clients can advise professionals that a project is pending so they can join the selection process.

In other instances, architects may be invited to present their qualifications for a pending project. This may be followed up by interviews as well as a presentation of prior work through the architect's portfolio.

Also, some architects choose to participate in design competitions. They may then be hired to handle a project with a group of people that has been gathered by the client to evaluate architects, known as a jury, likes their preliminary design and selects that architect.

In addition, architects may also make what are known as 'cold calls' to potential clients as they seek out work. They may also choose to initiate projects on their own.

There can be many reasons why someone chooses to become an architect. Many people enter this field because they have a desire to make the world a better place. Others enjoy the ability of being a beneficial part of their community. This type of involvement can assist clients in making a positive change.

Benefits of the Architectural Profession

For many architects, the excitement of the work comes from a blend of technical challenges, intellectual stimulation and creating designs. For others, it is the ability to be their own boss and to earn a living doing what they love that inspires them to enter this field.

Architectural practice options can cover a broad range of different possibilities. For instances, architects may also choose to teach, write, supervise and manage. As a result, it is possible for architects to discover their own niche within this profession.

Regardless of their initial reason for entering this field, most architects find they love it. This is a profession where many people find they are actually surprised to be paid for doing something they love so much. Although there are always routine tasks, as is the case with any profession, the benefits usually far outweigh the negatives.
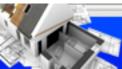
Becoming an Architect

In order to become a licensed architect within the United States, you will first need to meet three requirements. They are education, experience and passing an exam. The first step requires interested individuals to obtain a degree in architecture from an architectural program in college. Following graduation, it is necessary to complete an internship while working for an architectural firm. This will make it possible to obtain experience within 16 different practice areas.

Finally, it is necessary to pass a 9 division national Architect Registration Exam. After completing these three requirements, you then become eligible to apply for licensure or registration within any state. After that state has issued a license to you, you may then refer to yourself as an architect. At this point you can choose to open your own firm. From start to finish, the process of becoming a licensed architect typically involves between eight to ten years.

Preparing for an Architectural Career in High School

Students in high school who are interested in a career in the architectural profession, should know that it is important to begin preparing early. The environment in which you live is an excellent place to begin studying spaces, buildings and their relationships.

Make an effort to notice the effects of texture, color, shape and light. These are all tools that are used in architecture. Consider the way in which spaces feel when you are in them. Analyze your reactions and

try to determine if you can connect those reactions to design elements.

Necessary Skills for an Architectural Career

While in high school, it is important to plan a college prep program that is strong in history, English, math, social studies, physics and foreign languages. When possible, try to add courses in computer science and business. You might be surprised to learn that freehand drawing skills can actually be more beneficial in an architectural career than drafting ability. In addition, computer literacy is also essential to this field.

Some of the most important characteristics you can have as an architect are the ability to speak and write effectively, listen well and organize your thoughts and activities.

While in high school, it is a good idea to visit the design studios of architecture schools as well as tour the offices of local architectural firms. You should also read magazines and books on architecture, to help you gain a good understanding of the nature of this type of work. In addition, you might also consider attending a summer program. Many colleges offer programs that are specifically designed for high school students interested in entering the architectural profession.