

# THE PROCESS OF ARCHITECTURE: NYC ALTERATIONS

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The following is a sequence of steps most often taken in order to successfully develop an architectural project and create a high quality environment to live or work in. As every design project has unique requirements, often there will be deviation from this process. However this outline will help to provide you with insight to the design and construction process and give you a greater understanding of the steps you will be taking.

The first step in the process is the Programming and Documentation phase. The purpose of this phase is to acquire the necessary information to design and construct your project. The programming aspect entails discussion between you and your architect as to the objectives for the project. This would include discussion of how you envision using your new spaces. From these conversations you and your architect will be able to develop a program for the project outlining all requirements.

The documentation aspect entails identifying any existing conditions which may affect design and construction. Your architect will visit the site and conduct a survey. This survey will be used to create a drawing in Auto Cad of your existing space and its current configuration. Using this drawing, schematic designs can be created.

The second step is the Schematic Design phase consisting of basic planning in which a series of design concepts are produced to illustrate alternatives available to you given the existing conditions and your programmatic requirements. These schematic designs will show the arrangement of spaces with relation to each other in plan. Depending on the program of your project they may include partitions, doors, windows, stairs, millwork, plumbing fixtures and proposed furniture layouts. A number of schematic ideas will be generated which are then discussed with you and refined until an agreeable plan is found. Often elements from various schematic ideas are hybrid together to find the correct solution.

The Design Development phase is the third step which begins after the Schematic Design has been approved. This step further develops the design, including special features and details of the visual concept and any elements that may differ from the original design criteria. This development will be presented and discussed with you.

At about this point in the process your architect will assist you in submitting drawings to the co-op or condo board for a residential project or landlord for a commercial project. Your board or landlord will review the submitted drawings for compliance with the rules

of the building as they pertain to construction. Also your architect will assist you in retaining an expediting consultant in order to file with the New York City Building Department for construction and demolition permits.

The fourth step in the process is the Construction Documents phase. This consists of drawings and specifications for the purpose of assisting you in obtaining bids and construction permits as well as constructing the project. This is often what people call the “blue prints”. Construction Documents will often include the following:

- Demolition Plan, indicating all elements of the existing space to be removed
- Dimensioned Floor Plans, indicating the location and types of partitions, windows, doors, and millwork
- Ceiling plans, showing height, material and lighting layout
- Electrical and data plan showing locations of receptacles
- Finish plans and schedules, showing the location and type of paint, wall coverings, wood finishes, carpeting, floor coverings, fabrics and other special finishes
- Elevations as required to show the walls of the spaces as if looked at straight on – this helps the contractor to place elements vertically, ie. the location of a wall sconce on the wall, etc.
- Details, as required to convey the design intent of the project – this includes how particular pieces come together and connect or how a fabricator will be required to construct components of the project.
- Specifications, door and hardware schedule, lighting schedule, plumbing schedule, and finish schedule.

The fifth step is the Bidding and Negotiation phase in which your architect will assist you in obtaining bids and help you in evaluating and selecting a general contractor.

Step six is the Construction Observation phase of the project. Through out the construction of your project your architect will act as your representative to the contractor. This will likely include attending weekly site meetings during construction to ensure the project is being built per the decisions that have been made though out the design process. Your architect will keep you informed of the general progress and quality of the work being performed, review and approve submittals made by the contractor, review the contractors requests for payment, answer questions from the contractor regarding issues arising due to site conditions and prepare and issue punch lists. Through out the construction phase of the project your architect will help you in making decisions brought about by unforeseen conditions arising during construction.

As you continue to consider undertaking the process of creating your ideal environment you might consider taking the initial step of contacting your landlord or building

management company. Introduce yourself to the person on the management's staff who works with your building regarding construction projects. Explain a bit about what you are interested in doing and request to have the buildings alteration agreement e-mailed or faxed to you. This document will outline the rules for altering the space within your building as well as deposits required to begin construction. Once you retain the services of an architect he/she will be able to help you navigate the requirements outlined in the alteration agreement.

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