

# THE ARCHITECT'S CHECKLIST

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## **The Architect's Checklist**

*Over 250 questions to ask yourself before you begin work on your new home, renovation or addition.*

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I Questions before you begin:

1.  Am I financially prepared to undertake this project?
2.  How much will it cost? Or
3.  What is my budget range? Or
4.  How much money do I have to invest in my project – what is my upper limit? Project cost should include professional fees, construction costs, overhead and profit for construction and contingencies.
5.  How long will it take?
6.  What are the schedule constraints?
7.  How flexible am I to absorb an extended construction schedule.
8.  Does the style of my new home or addition/renovation fit the neighborhood? Does it need to?
9.  Can I expand? What are the zoning or site limitations / restrictions on my property?
10.  Will the new work add value to the property?
11.  Do I have the right professionals?
12.  What type of professionals will I need or will be helpful to complete the project.

1. Architect or Designer
2. Civil engineer (site drainage, grades and height calculations, septic design, etc.)

3. Lawyer for town approvals or variances
4. Landscape designer or architect
5. Interior designer
6. Lighting designer
7. Kitchen or closet designer
8. Environmental engineer or consultant (air quality)
9. Mechanical, Electrical, Plumbing engineer
10. Integrated technology consultant (“smart home”  
lighting systems, automated shades, computer  
networks, home theaters, stereo, etc.)
11. Construction manager or contractor
13.  What are the allowable setbacks on my property?
14.  Are their height restrictions on my building?
15.  Are their square footage limitations on my building?
16.  Are their agency approvals required for my project, i.e. coastal,  
historic, architectural review board, etc.?
17.  Does the town or city I’m building in have it’s own set of codes?
18.  What codes apply to the area and type of construction I’m planning,  
i.e. BOCA, IRC, etc...
19.  Are their any easement restrictions?
20.  Are their any trees in the way of my building project?
21.  Will the site drainage conditions make my project more difficult?

- 22.  Will city, town or state building requirements make my project more expensive?
- 23.  Are there subsurface conditions that may add complexity to my project ie. High water table, rock, suitable soils for building, lack of existing infrastructure, etc.
- 24.  Does the site have an adequate existing driveway or access that reaches construction or finished building locations?
- 25.  Does the site have adequate electrical utility lines that reach finished construction?
- 26.  Does the site have a natural gas or propane utility line that reaches finished construction?
- 27.  Where are the electrical and / or gas sources and meters located?
- 28.  Is there a choice of underground or overhead electrical service, and which is preferable?
- 29.  Does the site have an adequate existing water supply line and / or sewer

II Design Questions:

- 30.  What style will my new home be?
- 31.  How many stories?
- 32.  Will I have an attic?
- 33.  Will I have a basement?

34.  If construction begins and subsurface conditions make a basement impossible or too costly what impact will that have on the project?
35.  Will I have a crawlspace?
36.  Where is my main storage for the house?
37.  How many bedrooms do I need?
38.  How many bathrooms do I need?
39.  How many powder rooms do I need?
40.  How many cars will I put in my garage?
41.  Do I need a home office?
42.  Will I have an exercise room?
43.  Do I want a family room, a living room, both or none.
44.  Do I want a home theatre?
45.  Do I need a mudroom?
46.  Do I need a library?
47.  Do I want a porch?
48.  Do I want screens and / or windows on the porch?
49.  Will I have a deck?
50.  Do I want a fireplace in one room or various rooms ?
51.  What will the quality of light be relative to the site?
52.  Are there views I would like to take advantage of?
53.  Are there certain solar orientations I would like to take advantage of?

- 54.  Are their prevailing winds or likely breezes that will impact my home, site and living conditions?
- 55.  What are the desirable connections (or proximities) between rooms, i.e. kitchen and family room, outdoor porch and tv room, bedrooms and bathrooms, powder room to main hall, etc.?
- 56.  Have I lived in a location long enough to have a strong sense for the local climate and it's impact on my design?

### III Detailed questions about the many parts of my home:

#### 1. *The Foundation:*

- 57.  Is the contractor using concrete block or poured concrete for the foundation walls?
- 58.  Is the contractor reinforcing the foundation walls?
- 59.  Is the contractor using perimeter under slab insulation?
- 60.  Do I need a radon control system?
- 61.  What does the contractor plan for the exposed portions of my foundation walls (if any) on the exterior of the house?
- 62.  Is the contractor using a waterproof membrane and protection board on my foundation walls?
- ~~63.~~  Is the contractor adding conduits through the foundation wall to send electrical out of the house to items like landscape lighting?



- 64.  Is the contractor including stone or brick shelves in the foundation walls for exterior masonry veneer?
- 65.  Is the contractor treating the soil for termite control?
- 66.  Is the contractor planning on using foundation drain lines and leaders from downspouts to storm water drainage?
- 67.  Am I finishing the basement?
- 68.  What is the minimum ceiling height that would be acceptable in the basement – are mechanical soffits acceptable?
- 69.  What kind of system will I use to finish the walls in the basement?
- 70.  How do I plan to insulate the walls to prevent long term mold issues?
- 71.  Is there plumbing in my basement – will it require pumps to adequately drain?

2. *The Framing:*

- 72.  What is the framing material?
  - 1. Wood – sawn or engineered lumber
  - 2. Metal
- 73.  Do I need a steel infrastructure?
  - 1. For long spans or heavy loads eg. (steel columns, posts, beams, flitch plates, etc...)
- 74.  Do I need to use structural wood members?

1. For long spans or heavy loads (eg. Parallams, TJI's, etc...)

75.  Do I need to use steel hangers, post bases, tiedowns, etc. for structural or code / storm related issues.

3. *The Walls:*

76.  What is the exterior sheathing material of my house?

1. Brick
2. Stone
3. Stucco
4. Wood shingles, shakes, or siding
5. Synthetic materials (Hardyboard, plastic, etc...)
6. Vinyl
7. Aluminum, Steel, Zinc, etc.
8. Permiable rain screen material with waterproofing and insulation
9. EIFS (dryvit, etc...)

77.  Is the contractor planning on using plywood exterior sheathing, OSB, fiberboard, foamboard, diagonal tongue and groove, etc.?

78.  What kind of housewrap is the contractor planning on using?

79.  What kind of vapor barrier is the contractor planning on using?

80.  What kind of insulation am I using for the walls?

1. Fiberglass
  2. Rigid Foam
  3. Open or closed cell foam
  4. Structural Insulated Panels
81.  What kind of wall surface will I have on the interior of the home?
1. Drywall & water resistant 'greenboard'
  2. Veneer plaster
  3. Cement board for tile veneer
82.  What kind of finishes will I have on my interior walls?
1. Paint
  2. Tile
  3. Wall paper
  4. Millwork (wall panels, cabinetry, etc...)
  5. Special corners (rounded, beads, etc...)
83.  What kind of baseboard
1. Moldings
  2. Metal reveals
84.  What kind of crown moldings will I use if any?
85.  What kind of casing will I use at openings like windows and doors?
86.  Do I have any special openings (arches, columns, etc...)
87.  Do I want to sound insulate the walls anywhere in my house?
1. Bedrooms
  2. Bathrooms

### 3. Office

88.  Where do I need extra blocking (non-structural framing behind walls) for mounting things like:

1. Towel bars
2. Toilet paper holders
3. Sinks
4. Handicap bars
5. Large mirrors or pictures

### 4. *The Roof:*

89.  What is my roofing material?

1. Asphalt shingles
2. Slate shingles
3. Wood shingles
4. Aluminum shingles
5. Standing seam metal
6. Flat seam metal
7. Clay or concrete tile
8. Flat roofing material like EPDM or Modified Bitumen

90.  What is the underlayment material?

1. Snow and Ice shield
2. Building paper or felt

3. Cedar Breather

91.  What is the flashing material
1. Red Copper
  2. Lead Coated Copper
  3. Aluminum
  4. Galvanized steel
  5. Cor-ten steel
92.  Am I using gutters and downspouts?
93.  What material am I using for the gutters and downspouts?
1. Red Copper
  2. Lead Coated Copper
  3. Aluminum
  4. Steel Japanese rain chain
94.  What shape are the gutters and downspouts?
1. Semi circular gutters
  2. K-gutters
  3. Circular downspouts
  4. Rectangular downspouts
  5. Wood gutters and downspouts
95.  Would I like a rainwater collection system?
96.  Do I have a fireplace?
97.  Is the fireplace a metal firebox or masonry?
98.  Is the fireplace wood burning or gas?

- 99.  What is the type of firebrick am I using?
- 100.  What is the hearth material?
- 101.  What is the fireplace surround material?
- 102.  Do I have a chimney?
- 103.  What is the exterior chimney material?
  - 1. Brick
  - 2. Stone
  - 3. Wood
- 104.  Do I want to use solar panels?

5. *The Ceilings:*

- 105.  What kind of ceiling do I prefer?
  - 1. Paint
  - 2. Millwork (coffered ceilings)
  - 3. Veneer plaster
- 106.  Am I using ceiling fans?
- 107.  Do I have any lighting in the ceiling?
  - 1. Recessed
  - 2. Surface mounted
  - 3. Track
- 108.  Where are the ceiling registers for the HVAC?
- 109.  Do I want any light coves?

110.  Do I want to sound insulate the ceilings?

6. *The Floors:*

111.  What is my floor finish?

1. Hardwood
2. Tile
3. Stone
4. Synthetic
5. Cork

112.  Where are the floor registers for the HVAC?

113.  Are the floors heated?

114.  Do I need to put any electrical outlets in the floors?

115.  Do I need to finish the floor material?

1. Stain
2. Wax
3. Sealer

7. *The Doors and Windows:*

116.  What material are my doors and windows?

1. Wood
2. Aluminum

3. Vinyl

4. Steel

117.  Am I using Low-e glass?
118.  Am I using insulated glass?
119.  Do the windows and doors have muntin bars?
120.  Are the windows and doors true divided lites?
121.  What type of spacer bars do my windows and doors use?
122.  Is the glass in my window and doors required to meet safety or impact requirements?
123.  What kind of weatherstrip am I using on the doors & what color is it?

1. Vinyl

2. Foam

3. Felt

4. Metal interlocking

124.  What is the flashing material I am using?

1. Red Copper

2. Lead or Zinc Coated Copper

3. Aluminum

4. Fabric

125.  Do I want to use any decorative glass in the doors or windows?
126.  Do I want real or simulated shutters on the exterior of the house?



127.  Do I need to protect the windows and doors with items like storm or bahama shutters?

8. *The Hardware:*

128.  What is the finish on the hardware throughout the house including every door, window and room?
129.  What kind of hardware am I using on my exterior doors and windows?
130.  What kind of hardware am I using on my interior doors?
131.  What kind of hardware am I using on my cabinets?

9. *The Cabinetry:*

132.  Where and what type of cabinetry do I desire throughout the house?
1. Bookshelves
  2. Uppers / Lower
  3. TV cabinets
  4. Cubbies
  5. Storage
  6. Bunk Beds
  7. Closets

133.  What is the finish on the cabinetry in every room of my house?
1. Painted
  2. Stained / Clear
134.  What is the type of my cabinetry?
1. Stock
  2. Semi-Custom
  3. Custom
135.  What is the frame style of my cabinetry?
1. Faceframe
  2. Frameless
136.  What is the style of the door overlay?
1. Partial overlay
  2. Full overlay
  3. Flush
137.  What is the style of my doors and drawer fronts?
1. Hip-Raised Panel
  2. Flat Panel
  3. Flush Panel
  4. Variety of panel moldings (also called 'sticking')
138.  Do I need built in medicine cabinets or applied to wall?
139.  Do I need extra storage?
140.  What kind of stairs and balustrade do I have?
1. Clear finish / Stained wood

2. Painted wood

3. Metal

141.  What style stair parts do I prefer?

1. Balustrade

2. Nosing on stair treads

3. Handrail

142.  What kind of countertops do I want?

1. Stone

2. Wood

3. Tile

4. Metal

5. Synthetic

143.  Do I want a Kitchen Island?

144.  Do I need wine or drink storage?

145.  Do I want special dividers in my drawers?

146.  What kind of drawer slides do I desire?

10. *Fixtures & Specialties:*

147.  What type of sinks do I want to use?

1. Pedestal

2. Undermount

3. Top mount

#### 4. Farmhouse

- 148.  What type of tub or shower do I want?
- 149.  What type of toilets do I want to use?
  - 1. Wall mount
  - 2. Stand alone
- 150.  What type of faucets do I like?
- 151.  Do I need a potfiller in the Kitchen?
- 152.  What kind of shower head, mixing valve, specialty spray, hand spray do I like?
- 153.  What type of towel bars do I need?
- 154.  Do I need towel racks?
- 155.  Do I need robe hooks?
- 156.  Do I need shower baskets?
- 157.  Do I need a shower bench?
- 158.  Do I need built in glass shelves in the bathroom?
- 159.  What type of toilet paper holders do I want?
- 160.  Do I need an electric mirror?
- 161.  Do I need a built in soap dispenser?
- 162.  What kind of shower and tub enclosures will I want?
  - 1. Framed
  - 2. Frameless
- 163.  What is the finish on the hardware in my bathroom?
- 164.  Where are my exterior hose-bibs located?

11. *The Equipment:*

165.  What refrigerator am I using?
1. Built-in
  2. Standard
  3. Combination unit
  4. Separate units
  5. Water line required
166.  Do I want to use a cooktop or oven?
167.  What finish do I want on my equipment?
1. Standard
  2. Stainless Steel
  3. Custom Panels
168.  Single oven or double oven?
169.  Exhaust Hood
1. Exterior Vent
  2. Interior Vent
  3. Remote Fan
170.  What type of microwave?
1. Built-in
  2. Stand alone
  3. Under counter

- 171.  What type of dishwasher and how many?
- 172.  Do I want a warming drawer?
- 173.  Do I need a wine cooler?
- 174.  Do I need a drink refrigerator?
- 175.  Do I need an icemaker?
- 176.  Do I need a built in coffee maker?
- 177.  Do I need a stacked washer dryer or stand alone units?
- 178.  What power source will I use to run my appliances?
- 179.  Do I need a built in ironing board?
- 180.  Do I need an attic access stair built in?
- 181.  Do I need a built in bed unit?

12. *The Furnishings:*

- 182.  Do I need electric shades or manual?
- 183.  Do I want built-in floormats?
- 184.  Do I want a laundry chute?

13. *Special Construction:*

- 185.  Do I want a swimming pool?
- 186.  Do I want a hot tub?
- 187.  Do I want a lap pool?

188.  Do I want a pond or fountain?

189.  Will I any sports courts?

1. Basketball
2. Tennis
3. Volleyball
4. Horseshoes

14. *The Landscape:*

190.  What material is my driveway?

1. Asphalt
2. Granite
3. Cobblestone
4. Belgian Block
5. Concrete
6. Gravel

191.  Will my driveway require a drain?

192.  Do I want curbing around the driveway?

1. Belgian Block
2. Granite
3. Limestone
4. Metal edge

193.  Do I need site walls?

1. Stone
2. Brick
3. Concrete / combination

194.  Do I need steps in the landscape?

1. Bluestone
2. Brick
3. Stones
4. Pavers

195.  What are the landscape elements

1. Shrubs
2. Trees
3. Flowers

196.  Do I want sod?

197.  Do I need a fence?

1. Wood
2. Metal
3. Plastic / other

198.  Do I need an irrigation system?

199.  Do I have any exterior metal handrails or brackets?

200.  Are the downspouts ejecting into the landscape?

15. *Ventilation:*



- 201.  Is my plumbing properly ventilated?
- 202.  Is my Kitchen range properly ventilated?
- 203.  Am I using ridge vents, soffit vents or gable vents at the roof?
- 204.  Where is the ventilation for my dryer?
- 205.  Where is the ventilation for my crawlspace?
- 206.  Is there make up air for fireplaces, kitchen and bathroom exhaust?
- 207.  Are my mechanical systems properly ventilated
  - 1. HVAC
  - 2. Boiler
  - 3. Gas water heater
- 208.  Are my bathrooms and powder rooms properly ventilated?
- 209.  Do I have any louvers or vents on the exterior walls of the house?

16. *Plumbing and HVAC - Heating Ventilation Air Conditioning:*

- 210.  What type of system will I be using?
  - 1. Heat Pump
  - 2. Air conditioner
- 211.  What type of heat will I be using?
  - 1. Forced Air
  - 2. Baseboard
  - 3. Radiant
- 212.  What type or combination of energy will I need for my new system?

1. Electric
2. Gas
3. Oil
4. Geothermal
5. Wood
6. Coal
7. Wind
8. Solar

213.  Where will the exterior portion of my system be placed?
214.  Where will the interior mechanical system be placed?
215.  Does the room my equipment is placed need to be ventilated?
216.  Is the system properly drained and where will the drain lines run?
217.  Does the HVAC system need to be zoned?
218.  Where are my thermostats located?
219.  Can my thermostats be located remotely?
220.  Is the ductwork exposed, concealed or both?
221.  Is the ductwork insulated?
222.  What type and style of registers, grilles and diffusers am I using?
1. Flush
  2. Face mounted
223.  Where are all of my registers, grilles and diffusers located?
224.  Do I want to use air cleaners?
225.  Do I want a humidification system?

226.  Do I need a dehumidification system?
227.  Do I need vibration isolators on my mechanical system?
228.  Do I have proper shut off valves where I need them on the plumbing?
229.  Do I want to use zone dampers?
230.  What is the size and type and number of my water heaters?
231.  Where will the drain lines be placed from the water heaters?
232.  Will a pan be added to the water heaters to prevent spillover?
233.  Where is my plumbing coming through the walls and floor for items like:
1. Sinks
  2. Dishwashers
  3. Washing machines
  4. Refrigerator/Freezer ice makers
  5. Gas Water Heater
  6. Furnace
234.  Has the site water been tested ?
235.  Do I want / need a water treatment system and if so, what type?  
Filter, water softener, reverse osmosis, whole house, zoned, under sinks, etc.
236.  Do I have access to public water and sewer?
237.  Do I have a well and septic system?

- 238.  Is an existing septic system sized for the number of bedrooms required?
- 239.  Do I have adequate water pressure?
- 240.  How many Kitchen sinks do I want?
- 241.  Do I want hot water at the Kitchen Sink?

17. *Electrical:*

- 242.  What type of wall sconces will I want?
- 243.  What type of ceiling mounted fixtures am I looking for?
- 244.  What kind of recessed lighting do I need?
- 245.  Where are my smoke detectors located and how many do I need?
- 246.  Do I want to have switched outlets?
- 247.  Where will my switches be located and at what height?
- 248.  Where are my outlets located and at what height?
- 249.  Where is my cable TV, Internet and modem located?
- 250.  Do I need phone jacks?
- 251.  Do I have wall mounted controls
  - 1. Lighting,
  - 2. Electronics
  - 3. Alarm
  - 4. Music
- 252.  Do I have landscape lighting?

- 253.  Do I want under cabinet lighting?
- 254.  What type of lights do I want in the closet?
- 255.  Do I want cove lighting anywhere?
- 256.  Do I have enough shower lighting?
- 257.  Do I need pool lighting?
- 258.  Do I want driveway lights?
- 259.  Do I have any path or step lighting?
- 260.  Do I need a standby generator, if so what should the generator operate and what size should it be?
- 261.  Do I want a security system?
- 262.  Do I need a lighting protection system?
- 263.  Do I want a ice and snow melting system?
- 264.  Where should the electrical panel(s) be located?