Recommended Questions to Ask When Interviewing an Architect

- **Design process**:
  - How do you develop a design/what is your design process?
    - Usually divided into 4 stages of design, but each architect is different so it is important to understand their process: 1) discovery/programming; 2) schematic/conceptual design; 3) design development; 4) construction drawings.
  - How do include the client in your creative process?
    - How will the architect gather information of your needs, goals, desires, etc.?
      - We find the most successful designs are a result of the architect taking great consideration of your overall lifestyle goals, intended use of the residence, and what is of importance to you not only at this stage in your life but also planning for the future.
  - Are they available to take on your project at this time?
  - What is the approximate timeline for my project?
    - This is a very important question as it will dictate when you will be able to have a construction ready set of plans to submit for permitting and break ground. You will need to make sure their timeline is appropriate for your expectations and project needs. When you review the proposed timeline, it's important to understand that meeting this timeline is a team effort. How much time is built in for you to review plans and give feedback or approval?
    - Once you have selected your architect, we advise requesting a project gantt chart or timeline of milestones/expected deliverables for a smoother project. This is part of our pre-construction project management as we act on our clients' behalf to help usher the design team through completion of these milestones.
  - What does the architect see as important considerations, potential challenges and, more importantly, opportunities for your project?
    - As a custom waterfront homebuilder, the projects we build reside on some of our area's most valuable properties and we advise our clients throughout design how they can best capture the opportunities for views, lot orientation advantages, and design that increases the value of your investment.
  - Do they offer sketches, 3D renderings or other visualizations?
- **Experience**:

- What experience do you have working in my area?

  - This question is very important as no geographical conditions or governmental bodies have the same building requirements. Hiring an architect who is familiar with your property location is of the utmost importance to factor in environmental and local government regulations into the design.

- Are they willing to offer references from past clients?

- **Fees/Scope**:

  - How do you charge/what is your fee structure?

    - Architecture fee structures vary from firm to firm, some common structures you may encounter are:

      - Percentage-based: based upon the overall cost of construction, the most common fee structure as it gives flexibility in the design.

      - Per Square Foot: a unit cost per square foot, utilized when a project is less complex or easier to estimate.

      - Stipulated Sum: a fixed-cost based on construction cost of a clearly defined scope.

      - Hourly: an agreed upon rate usually for a tighter scope of work, often used when additional design services are added or needed to complete the project.

  - What is included in your fees?

    - Make sure to review the full scope of work, including who handles contract administration.

  - Do you handle contract administration (known as CA)?

    - We recommend the architect is responsible for CA as it provides for a smoother build. CA gives the architect the critical responsibility of:

      - Review and approval of submittals

      - Review and approval of change orders

      - Responding to RFIs (Request for information)

      - Conducting scheduled site visits

      - Collaboration in project meetings throughout design and construction

      - Monitoring progress/work conformance

- Do you offer in-house interior design?

  - If not, what interior designers have you had the most successful collaborations with?

  - Tip: When hiring an interior designer outside of the architecture firm, ensure you fully understand their individual scopes of work as often their contractual scopes may overlap. For instance, you may hire your architect to include reflective ceiling plans, lighting plans, or trim details – or vice versa, having your interior designer incorporate into their scope. There are design services that can be handled by either the architect or ID so make sure you have a clear understanding of who is responsible for which scope, and perhaps who has the most experience incorporating them into the plans for the best design outcome.

- Is landscape design and/or hardscape design included in your scope?

  - More often than not, landscape design is handled by an independent landscape architect and can include irrigation, drainage, landscape lighting and hardscape design (pool, terraces, driveway, water features, perimeter walls, etc.) It is important to retain a landscape architect early in the design phase to create a comprehensive design that flows with the style and function of the main structure.

- **Project management**:

  - Who will be designing my project?

    - Who will be managing my project? If not the same architect for design/PM, what is the designing architect's oversight on the project after schematic design approval?

  - Who is my main point of contact?

  - How often will you update me on the project's progress?

- **Budget**:

  - How do you manage the budget?

    - We recommend sharing your budget with your architect at the initial design consultation, so they understand and design within your financial requirements. Architects should have a general understanding of what their designs are currently costing from other projects they are or have worked on recently. This is where our pre-construction collaboration can be of paramount importance because we conduct a construction cost estimate that is a general "ballpark" during the design phase to ensure you don't wind up with a finished set of plans that are 2x your budget. We work alongside

the architect to offer our experience with materials or construction methods that conform to your budget needs.

Notes: