

**ALL I NEED ARE  
FOUR WALLS  
AND A ROOF ...  
I DON'T NEED  
AN ARCHITECT.**

**Not True.** Architects help make decisions. After talking with an architect, many people are surprised at their own definite ideas about what they want in a house.

Architects help you think about how a building *functions*. They can design a house that is flexible enough to grow with a young couple who work now but expect children later. They can design an inexpensive, energy-efficient, fully accessible home for retired people on a fixed income. They can show how a house built for one family can be remodeled into a house for a group of single working people.\*

*\* For example, an architect in Washington, D.C., found a new way to plan traditional space. He took a four-story Victorian townhouse and divided it so that two friends, both working professionals, had separate and private living spaces. Instead of slicing the building down the middle, as they had expected, he came up with an innovative plan that gave each person one complete floor and two half floors.*

**ANYWAY, ALL I  
NEED IS A  
BUILDER OR A  
CONTRACTOR.**

**Not True.** The architect is the single professional who has the training and experience to guide you through the entire building process.

An architect is bound professionally to serve as the *owner's agent*. As the head of a team of specialists (engineers, landscape architects, contractors, etc.), an architect's first obligation is to look out for your interests. Architects' drawings and construction documents, which tell the contractor precisely what to build, set down your exact requirements. They can help you get bids for construction based on those same requirements.\* And architects follow the contractor's work for you to make sure there are no surprises—you know what you will get.

*\* For example, a Detroit family of six almost lost hope in buying a 60-year-old house that was just right for their needs. The house needed quite a bit of work, and the bids the family got from two remodeling contractors were both over \$45,000. Then a friend introduced them to an architect who estimated her firm could do the job for \$25,000—including her fee. She did the job for less than that (\$23,879) and the family got exactly what they wanted.*

**AN ARCHITECT  
IS A LUXURY  
I CAN'T AFFORD.**

**Not True.** Architects' fees are not just added on top of your project costs. They can save you money in many ways.

Architects can oversee your budget and negotiate to get the best materials and workmanship at a good price. Much more importantly, an architect's design can greatly reduce your energy and maintenance costs, which add up to many times the purchase price of a home over the years.\* They can turn a difficult lot into a successful building site. They can spend time planning and developing your ideas fully to avoid costly refinements after construction is underway. They can make sure bids for construction are based on exactly what you wanted and expected so you really do get the best price. They can find parts of the project you can do yourself, or show you how to act as your own contractor.

*\* For example, one cold day in February, a "simple solar" house proved it could conserve energy during a hard Massachusetts winter. The inside temperature of the house was 70 degrees*

# ARCHITECTS JUST DO BLUEPRINTS.

**Not True.** Today, the best answer to the question “What do architects do?” may be “What do you *want* them to do?” Renovation? Energy analysis? Site selection? Interiors? Cost analysis? Construction management?

In designing your project, architects can add a porch, a skylight—or design a complete house. They can adapt an old building to a new use and keep its character. They can provide cost estimates. They can make a building safe for occupancy. They can fit a building to a difficult site. They can find skillful craftspeople. They can enlarge a house so you no longer need to move.\* Or they can just talk to you about what you want your house to be.

*\* For example, an architect in California remodeled a 1938 house to find additional space—with little cost and without disrupting the household. He did it by connecting an old garage to the rest of the house with a two-story greenhouse and a circular stairway. The garage became a new studio space flooded with light. It suited the homeowner’s needs and budget perfectly. Why? Architects have the experience and training to create solutions that are simple, effective, and beautiful. They know how to give you more of what you want than you even knew you wanted. In this case, the architect worked around an inexpensive, off-the-shelf greenhouse.*