

Small Projects PIA Survey Results

Summer 1994

#2

by Rosemary McMonigal, AIA
Minneapolis

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The Small Projects PIA received almost 300 responses to our recent member survey. The results have much to say about who we are and the direction we'd like to see the PIA go.

The surveys indicate that respondents are licensed an average of 13 years. Eighty-eight percent have an ownership position in their firm, and the average firm has five employees. Three-quarters of the architects practice primarily in urban areas.

Small projects represent the majority (81%) of the respondents' work. Small projects are profitable for 68 percent of practitioners, not profitable for 21 percent, and profitable some of the time for 11 percent. Architects overwhelmingly feel that a small-projects practice offers high (44%) and medium (49%) rewards.

In terms of practice information, regarding owner/architect agreements, respondents use:

- Their own form 41 percent of the time
- An AIA form 50 percent of the time
- No form 9 percent of the time.

Two-thirds of architects distinguish between schematic design and design development. Of the construction values of your work, 54 percent are competitively bid and 46 percent are negotiated bid contracts.

The question addressing the most difficult aspects of doing small projects brought forward responses ranging from: "Getting paid!" to "Clients not understanding that small doesn't mean easy and inexpensive," to "High degree of liability for relatively low fee." Many respondents noted that small projects demand the same effort as larger projects but for a much smaller fee. Educating clients, project and time management, profitability, and finding contractors are common concerns.

We are pleased to report that the majority of architects feel that client communication is their number one strength. Respondents indicated the following as their top areas of interest (percentages indicate the total number of respondents who checked off that particular area as being an area of interest).



1. Pricing Services	79%
2. Marketing	70%
3. Cost Estimating	64%
4. Computers—	
Construction Documents	62%
5. Business Planning	61%
6. Computers—	
Office Applications	60%
7. Liability Issues/Finance	60%
8. Contracts and Agreements	55%
9. Environmentally Responsible Design	52%
10. Time Management	51%

Almost all of the respondents are interested in satisfying continuing education requirements through programs/activities relevant to topics related to small projects.

We would like to extend a hearty thanks to everyone who responded to our Small Projects PIA Survey. We look forward to using the important and extremely valuable feedback we received in shaping the Small Projects PIA to reflect the needs of our members.

Convention Wrapup

by Donald Wardlaw, AIA
Oakland

This year's AIA national convention featured programs of special interest to small-projects architects. They were: "Doing Small Projects Successfully," a seminar by James R. Franklin, FAIA, AIA resident

fellow; "Specifications for Small Projects," a consult by Mark Kalin, AIA; "Small-Project Agreements," a consult by Harry Jacobs, FAIA; "Small-Project Agreements," a seminar by Harry Jacobs, FAIA; and "The Small-Projects Brochure Exchange," an informal workshop and social event sponsored by the Small Projects PIA with assistance from Ellen Flynn-Heapes of Flynn-Heapes Kogan, marketing consultants for design professionals.

The newfound legitimacy of the small project as a profitable and serious focus of many architects is, I think, due in part to the research undertaken by the AIA Small Projects Task Force, chaired by Harry Jacobs, which began working in 1989 and presented its final report in July 1990. Jim Franklin was project director for the AIA staff and is a recognized authority on small-projects practice.

About 200 (a full house) turned up for Jim's engaging, information-rich seminar. Jim reviewed the lessons of the task force report and the growing body of knowledge about this market niche. Small-projects work is for many architects a market of choice, with challenging and satisfying responsibilities and real opportunities for personal and professional growth. Other key findings were that small-projects work tends to be profitable and that methods of practice often differ from traditional methods.

One difference, according to Franklin, is in marketing. Marketing for small projects places great importance on personal contacts. Consequently, most marketing strategies involve the creation and

development of a client base. These are the people who have been clients, might refer you to clients, might become clients, or might become repeat clients. There are many strategies, and imagination pays dividends. In general, cold, unfocused promotion brings few results. Marketing is a hot topic among small-projects architects. The trend is to sophistication.

Another theme of Franklin's presentation was economy of process. Most small-projects architects loosely follow a maxim known as Occam's Razor. The maxim states that "assumptions introduced to explain a thing must not be multiplied beyond necessity." The loose translation is: "do what needs to be done, but no more, and do it when it needs to be done, not sooner and not later." According to Franklin, small-projects architects are compelled to manage their work efficiently because the fees are relatively small. The cost of providing traditional services does not decline in proportion to a decline in project cost.

So what sort of architect does well at small projects? Franklin notes the following useful traits:

- An entrepreneurial, "can do" approach
- A pragmatic, "get hands dirty" fascination with the construction process
- A generalist and problem-solver outlook
- Unusually high dedication to client service
- A concern for clear, unambiguous client communications
- A disdain for bureaucracy
- The confidence of one who likes

to make decisions

- A preference to work alone
- The ability to draw and write in a direct concise manner
- The knowledge of when to stop elaborating (Occam's Razor).

In his consult on small-projects specifications, Mark Kalin compared and contrasted small-project and large-project specification approaches. A major difference is that small-project specifications are designed for pricing rather than bidding. That is, the architect and owner are making product choices prior to project bidding or in the course of project negotiation. This allows for simpler descriptions of products, since equality of competing products is not an issue. Not only does this reduce the opportunity for liabilities originating in the specification, it is also more appropriate to the scale of small-projects work. Builders have less time available for bidding small projects, and few products are used in sufficient quantity to realize the savings of a more detailed and complex bidding process.

According to Kalin, there are three basic classes of specifications: a full specification, a short-form specification, and a sheet specification. It is important to pick the right product for the project. Architects should gravitate to more detailed specifications when the project size or risk gets larger.

Whichever type one uses, Kalin recommends maintaining some form of master specification. With the widespread use of word-processing software, it is now fairly easy to keep a master copy that can

be duplicated and then edited for each project. However, maintaining also means keeping current. For the larger specification types, this can require some effort, since product data and materials testing undergo constant revision.

Both the AIA and Construction Specifications Institute have developed master specifications for full specs and short specs. A benefit of these systems is that for a fee (a really good fee) annual updates are provided. Both systems are available on electronic media. Kalin is a contributor to AIA MASTERSPEC and thinks it may be a better choice for architect specification writers. This is because the AIA system is a writing-by-deletion system and may require less specialized expertise. Presently, there is no AIA- or CSI-sponsored master system for small-projects specifications. Stay tuned.

The Small-Projects Agreements seminar was a panel discussion by Harry Jacobs, FAIA; Laurie Maurer, FAIA, an architect specializing in small projects; Dale Ellickson, FAIA, Esq., senior director of AIA documents; and Frank Musica, Assoc. AIA, Esq., Victor O. Schinnerer & Company, insurance underwriters.

The seminar was an occasion to review the new AIA small-project agreements and compare them to the letter-form/in-house-generated agreements widely used by small-projects architects. It is known that A107 and B141 are seen as too complex or too unfriendly by many small-projects architects. The new agreements attempting to address this concern are: A105 & A205,

Standard Form of Agreement Between Owner and Contractor for a Small Project, and B155, Standard Form of Agreement between Owner and Architect for a Small Project.

The language of the new documents is refreshingly direct. For example:

(A107)—"The Owner shall pay the Contractor in current funds for the Contractor's performance of the Contract the Contract Sum of _____ Dollars (\$____), subject to additions and deductions as provided in the Contract Documents."
(A105)—"Subject to additions and deductions by Change Order, the Contract Sum is:"

Similar examples abound.

With B155, by design, large blank areas were incorporated into the body of the document in recognition of the need to allow a tailoring of the agreement to individual projects and circumstances. Customization of agreements is one reason that many use agreements of their own development. Both Jacobs and Maurer presented examples of their letter-form agreements. Maurer noted that she has over time developed a document that works very well with her clients and she is not likely to abandon it.

For members who use AIA agreements, the new small-project agreements bear study. Bear in mind that these are *new* documents. They have not been tested in court. (On the other hand, has your letter agreement been tested in court?) A paragraph-by-paragraph comparison of the old and new documents may be a worthwhile exercise for mem-

bers considering the use of the new documents and those who use their own agreements as well.

A final highlight of the convention was the brochure exchange. About 50 people attended for drinks, hors-d'oeuvres, conversation, and an informal critique of office brochures. Ellen Flynn-Heapes, a national marketing consultant from Alexandria, Va., (703/838-8080) graciously sat in and offered her insights on the art of promoting the small-projects portfolio.

The inspiration for this event was a reference in AIA MEMO to office brochures and the fact that they can easily cost \$40,000 (!). Suspecting that this might not be the preferred investment of small-projects architects, we wondered if it could be done for less.

According to Flynn-Heapes, expensive slick brochures are not necessarily the most effective. Homespun is ok. What is important is to convey warmth, a personal flavor, and an awareness of clients issues and concerns.

What is a common shortcoming? "A lack of attention to client needs and concerns and a desire to be neutral." Neutrality, the lack of a strong or identifiable personality or philosophy, while ostensibly not making enemies, apparently doesn't make many real friends either. There's a marketing failure for you.

Adds Flynn Heapes, "One brochure that really worked well was brought by a church architect. It was a series of vignettes showing client problems and their response. It managed to convey the clients involvement and excitement at

being a part of the process."

Much of the success of this year's offerings can be attributed to Harry Jacobs, FAIA. We are now planning events for next year's convention, taking into account responses from the PIA questionnaire. Any Small Projects PIA members in the Atlanta area who can assist us, phone home.

Code Synopsis

*by Perry A. Haviland, FAIA
Oakland*

In completing the documents for small projects, let's not overlook the basics. Your name, address, phone and facsimile, date, seal, and wet signature are needed in the title block together with a clear concise title of the scope of the project and the location and/or address. It also is helpful if there is an index to what is being submitted. For example, if a single larger drawing is supplemented with three or four pages of specification and two pages of calculations, list them all on the larger sheet with the statement "attached as if included herein." It does not hurt to stamp and wet sign each of the supplement covers and even wet initial each page.

The Code Stuff

Include on the main document a code data information list. Name the applicable codes and their versions. State the occupancy classification, the type of construc-

tion, the building height, the building or floor areas, and any fire protection features. If there is an area or occupancy separation, include that information with the data.

By your naming the applicable codes and identifying the edition year, the plans examiner, contractor, building users, and others in the future can better understand the code basis for the project. If there are significant local amendments to the model codes, such as security ordinances or minimum fire ratings for roofs, they should be so stated and preferably referenced by ordinance number.

Stating the building or floor areas and then demonstrating the applicable increases due to yard separations, multi-story height, or fire sprinklers makes a statement about your knowledge of the code and allows the plans examiner and others a simple way to verify the conclusions.

Occupant load calculations often determine which occupancy the project is in the first place. The numbers of exits from a room, floor level, or building logically follow. A key plan can be helpful in demonstrating an exit path with the related required widths. Make sure your plan dimensions the clear widths of the exiting elements. Do not forget to show the exit signage and the fire extinguisher locations.

Building or story height is just as important as the area tabulations in determining construction type. Include a dimensioned section or similar information to your elevations and indicate "grade," "highest point," and/or "averaged height."

Universal access features of your project documentation is important. Take the opportunity to demonstrate your knowledge of the subject and clearly dimension all of the applicable clear dimensions to fixtures or other items, such as door strike to wall. Your drawings should contain the applicable signage information. Include the international symbol of accessibility, noting proper proportion and color, in your documentation.

The Other Stuff

Make sure your drawings clearly note any other safety items that are often overlooked. These would include safety glass, handrail extensions, stair tread markings, smoke detectors, and doors that are to remain unlocked. If there are any special features to your design that you think are important or about which the code may be silent, perhaps you should develop a note explaining such. Any special product, assembly, or material should have an approval number with the applicable agency stated.

Upbeat Message in Texas

*by Gabriel Durand-Hollis, AIA
San Antonio*

Jim Franklin, FAIA, the resident fellow at the national AIA, presented a seminar in San Antonio, March 28, 1994, in which he delivered an upbeat message about small projects. Much of the mes-

sage mirrored what our Small Projects PIA is about. And the attendees mirrored our members in the PIA.

For example, half of the attendees were sole practitioners or represented firms of four or fewer people. Most indicated they were there because of a desire to do small projects profitably.

The best markets in San Antonio were identified as single-family residences, schools, interiors, and retail, industrial, government, and bank facilities. Other sections viewed as healthy were historic buildings and franchises.

Strategic Planning

Attendees looked at project markets and which ones were producing good projects, both fun and profitable. Most professional satisfaction comes from projects that involve:

- Good, experienced clients
- Fun
- Challenges
- Repeat work.

Small projects are and can continue to be very satisfying professionally for architects. Some stated reasons are that the market is moving to smaller projects because of the economy, age of existing building stock, and cautious decision making by clients, and the above-mentioned characteristics are mostly present in small projects.

Architects have lost markets to other players over the past decade or so. The players, such as interior designers, project managers, engineers, and contractors, are providing services or assurances that

architects are reluctant to provide. There are ways to provide what they provide as separate services to the architect's contract or in a package so that the client maintains a high level of confidence, contact, and satisfaction with the architect. This is relatively easy to do on small projects and will yield more work. Remember that a client's satisfaction will be passed on to those he or she knows—a happy client will do your marketing.

Small projects are always around in good times or bad. So a career including this market will insulate the practitioner from the extremes in the economy. Architects enjoy the autonomy that they have on small projects—less people meddling in their work. Architects can improvise with methods, materials, or design concepts since the downside risks are smaller. The public has a need for small-projects practitioners. In contrast, the availability of architects for large projects often exceeds the projects.

The program included free-wheeling discussion of marketing, market forces affecting the practice, tips and technologies that small-projects practitioners use, and trends that are changing project delivery.

Much of what was discussed can be quite useful in the design of larger buildings. However, small projects have many advantages that have not been trumpeted before. Franklin's positive view of the work is refreshing for small practitioners—the tip and techniques for providing a higher level of service will benefit architects individually and the profession as a whole.

Write Articles, Get Published

by *Deborah Lane, AIA*
Berkeley

Architects and design are a waste of money. Vanilla/beige color schemes are the only way to go. These are but two of the many commonly held ideas about design and building I confront as a residential architect.

Writing articles about design and building has given me the chance to promote and educate from an architect's point of view. Articles with my name in the byline are also a form of free advertising for my firm. Here are some of my findings after three years of writing for two local publications.

The Rewards

Writing articles has not brought clients flocking to my door; but one article did persuade a client to hire me for full services, and others have hired me for a consultation because of my writing. I have received some calls from people who kept my articles for as long as a year before contacting me.

More typically, having my articles on hand and available to clients has added to my credibility, educated clients as to my point of view, and provided clients with information they found to be very valuable. Whether clients hire me or not, they usually tell me they read through and appreciated the articles I gave them as part of my interviewing portfolio.

Getting Started

If you want to begin to write articles and have them published, contact your local newspapers and have an article you have written available to send them. I found it quite easy to find publications simply because I am able and willing to write.

While some newspapers I called had a policy not to allow any professionals to write articles because they viewed it as advertising, others were quite eager to have a columnist they could rely on to produce articles. One local building publication that was starting up actually approached me while I was attending a benefit for a project I donated my services to. Another happened to need a columnist the particular month I called.

Negotiating a Position

Once my editors decided my work was desirable, I found I had a job as long as I wanted. I continue to write for the same two publications I began with three years ago. In fact, I tried to stop writing for one publication because I found the editor unreliable; a new editor for this same publication saw some articles I had written and contacted me to begin writing again.

The publications I work with do not compensate me for my articles so the main issue to negotiate has been how often to write articles and how much lead time I need. Knowing that it takes me several concentrated hours of work to develop a topic, I ask for as much lead time as possible (usually two to three weeks). I am also able to

tell the editors if I am too busy during a specific time frame to write. I know one architect who writes a bimonthly column; but for me, this would be too much.

The most important aspect of writing for a publication is dealing with a well-informed and responsive editor. One of the editors I work with has been able to transform my collegiate writing style into a more journalistic approach. She also helped me to develop new topics to write about. Judging from the experiences of other published writers I know, this kind of dynamic relationship between writer and editor is highly unusual for newspapers and other local publications. Many editors seem to concentrate primarily on grammar, not content.

Regardless of the style of the editor, I insist on receiving a copy of all published articles so I can review how closely the publication kept to my intent and whether or not I want to continue writing for that particular publication.

Hanalei Roofing and Design Co.

by *Robert T. Simpson, FALA*
San Francisco

At the United Airlines security check for our flight to Hawaii, Matt was having some difficulty explaining the two large boxes packed with power drills and other construction devices. Eventually convinced that we would not be attempting in-flight renovation of our 747, the

guard let us pass to board. We would be needing these tools soon after our arrival in Kauai. Checked luggage had been lost before, and, in this case, loss or delayed arrival would be more than just an inconvenience.

The next morning in the shipping yard at Nawiliwili harbor, we watched with fingers crossed as just under two tons of corrugated metal roofing was carefully loaded onto the only truck available that could also negotiate some eight single-lane bridges on the last stretch of road to the project site. This was our last major hurdle, and—with materials finally assembled—we set out for the site.

Matt Sylvia, his son Mark, and I were advance crew for the upcoming effort. An experienced contractor and close friend of Bill Turnbull's, Matt had built the original condominiums at the Sea Ranch and many Turnbull houses since. Matt would be our crew boss. By the next day the crew would be complete with the addition of Bill Turnbull, his sister Margaret and her husband, Bob Simon.

Our objective was a house designed by us and recently constructed on the north shore of Kauai just beyond Hanalei. Intended as a simple, open, and light-filled pavilion, the completed house successfully achieved what we had hoped for, except that it had one very major problem. The translucent plastic roof that allowed filtered sunlight to so generously fill the interior was not permitted by code.

Overlooked by us at the time of design was a local (Kauai) amend-

ment to the UBC that limited the area of contiguous plastic roof panels. Unfortunately, this limitation was also overlooked by county plan checkers at the time of permit application, resulting in the roof being built as designed and not recognized as a problem until final inspection.

After several months spent exploring alternatives (including appeal, which was denied), the only option left was to change the roof. The county approved a design that still kept much of the light quality intact, and, with the support of a very patient client, the Hanalei Roofing and Design Co. went to work.

The work was not complex, but it was slow going. We knew that on the north coast of Kauai we could expect rain every day, and with the house completed and furnished, this meant that the existing roof would have to be maintained in place. For each panel the screw fasteners were removed, new panels measured, cut, mated to the existing and then secured in place through existing support spaces. Not surprisingly, this often took more than one try.

We worked from the end of the sunrise showers until afternoon showers or nightfall shut us down, and by the end of the fifth day, when the work was complete, we had even learned to walk the 8/12 pitch with some confidence.

Formal CEU credits were not awarded, but the lessons in team building alone made the effort worth much more than the week invested. Matt will be the first to agree that every contractor should

have at least one chance to run a bunch of architects on a labor crew.

Postscript

Ten years later, both house and roof survived Hurricane Iniki intact and undamaged except for some flying debris from neighboring property.

Two Important Early Events

*by Bennett Christopherson, AIA
Berkeley*

As our firm's workload has grown over the years, we have added staff and instituted new work procedures to manage effectively the dozens of custom residential remodeling projects on the boards at any given time. Design direction for all projects is established by the two principals, who closely monitor the efforts of 20 design staff members to insure quality and fidelity to the design concept.

Ten years ago we established a firm project-manager structure, where each project has a manager, and each manager has five to ten projects. We continued with management improvements by assigning special tasks. One project manager is also responsible for keeping the library and sample collection current. Another is staff coordinator, responsible for distributing the appropriate workload to all staff. One is in charge of in-house education programs, while another is in charge of producing

all promotional materials. Project managers take turns checking plans for projects prepared by others.

Tan sheets, the information profiles on new clients, are filled out by the principals' secretary during the first contact with the client. Green sheets are the detailed information and program-requirements documents prepared by the principal after the first meeting. We have yellow sheets and blue sheets, and we used to have orange sheets too.

All these management aids and procedures help us keep control over many small projects. None of this organization of the office would work, however, if our clients, involved in a very personal residence remodeling project, were to have trouble accepting the role of the project manager; if the clients, at some time, felt that they were being handed off.

There are two events that take place early in the relationship with each client that serve to promote the team concept and make it clear that the principal is contributing his best efforts to the design. They also demonstrate that a number of people in different roles will be cooperating to provide the total sequence of architectural services.

The first important early event in the relationship with a new client is the appointment call, and the second is the principal's first meeting with the client.

During the first appointment call, the principal's private secretary, spending 25 minutes or more with the caller, will learn the nature of the proposed project, who referred the caller, and usually

a great deal of background information about size of family, occupations, hobbies, personal preferences, and dislikes. Our private secretary explains the services of the firm, the design process, and often the construction process, always with wit and often with anecdotes. Billing rates and costs for services are discussed. Our private secretary can describe the design process in layperson terms, often more effectively than a principal can, and since she is not the receptionist and is not fielding phone calls, she has ample time to get to know the new prospective client during this first phone call. In addition, during the first contact, new clients recognize that the principal is being managed by the secretary, by the prospective project manager, as well as other support staff, and the new client almost always cooperates to help make the process work. Our secretary making the appointment never uses words like "managed" or "cooperate," but in the fully annotated description of the process the message does get through, and the client is anticipating meeting the project manager in the near future. When the client eventually comes to our office and meets the phone-friend who explained things and made the appointment with the principal, it can be a warm and friendly reintroduction.

The second important early event, which, in an unspoken manner, validates the team concept and completes the preparation of the client for the role of the principal for the rest of the project, is the principal's first meeting with

the client.

Each client is different, and each first meeting develops a dynamic of its own. First meetings for remodels are usually at the client's home. Virtually all successful first meetings involve a high level of personal involvement and performance by the principal. We have been told, by the contractor who was present, that in a one-hour consultation about a modest bathroom remodel, a principal proposed five different workable schemes involving various scopes of work and amounts of effort; all vastly superior to anything the owner and contractor had been able to dope out during the three previous weeks. We believe this level of performance at the first meeting is crucial to our being able to handle numerous small projects.

This first meeting establishes that the principal is a designer, the designer of this project, and a person who understands the nitty gritty of door swings and construction costs. A paradox it is that a strong design point of view established by the principal during the first meeting can pave the way for acceptance of other members of the team during the remainder of the process, but we know it works.

Profile of a Small-Projects Architect

by Donald Wardlaw, AIA
Oakland

My work comprises small projects—that is, projects that can be done entirely by myself or with the help of specialized consultants. I am not motivated to have a larger practice and more specialized responsibilities. Indeed, I am drawn to the kind of work I do by the opportunity to be fully engaged in all aspects of the architectural service provided under my name. I need to know my clients and know exactly what I am providing. I take great satisfaction in successfully providing for my clients because I have found it to be personally validating in deep and fundamental ways.

While I have worked on many projects designed for prototypical users, I am drawn to buildings and projects that are tailored to the needs of particular people. Small-projects work is attractive for this strong purpose. It is also attractive for the wide assortment of skills and range of knowledge brought into play on a daily basis. It is appealing for the spirit of teamwork and shared accomplishment that is made possible by the small closely working teams found in small projects.

Since founding my practice, projects include:

- 500 s.f. residential addition in southern California (not built)
- 300 s.f. bedroom and deck

addition in Oakland

- 3,500+ s.f. residence in Oakland Hills (in association with another architect)
- 750 s.f. residential addition in Albany
- 90 s.f. bath and deck addition in southern California (pending financing)
- Coordination of exterior repairs, 3,500 s.f. residence in Oakland
- 4,500 s.f. theater addition (in association with another architect).

It has taken several years to arrive at an understanding of the proper mix of project type, office organization, and level of personal responsibility that best suits my needs and abilities. Over the years I have held leadership positions on projects of varying type and scale. The work has included:

- Private residences, new and renovated
- Multifamily housing including condominiums, apartments, and townhouses
- Low-rise office buildings
- Retail commercial facilities, new and renovated
- Hospitals and other public sector buildings.

Many of the skills I now bring to bear were fostered in the employ of several capable and well-respected architecture firms. I am grateful to each of them for their patience and willingness to share their valuable knowledge and insights.

I am aware that some small practices like my own do not offer the same direct opportunities for the professional development of other young architects. I still feel a

responsibility for this important element of keeping the profession strong.

[Ed. note: This is the first in a series of profiles of Small Projects PLA members. Send highlights of your own career and practice, or a profile of someone you admire, to Candace Kerman at the AIA (see page 12).]

Let's Talk Business: A Member-to-Member Forum

How do you handle fee collection?

Each issue of the Small Projects PLA newsletter features a question on which members can share viewpoints with each other. Answers will be printed in subsequent newsletter issues. Please send your views, comments, and suggestions to Candace Kerman at the AIA (see page 12).

Don't forget that you can also respond through the PLA forum bulletin board on AIAOnline.

Tips and

Helping the Client Save Architectural Fees

Small residential projects often come with being a small-projects practitioner. Architectural fees are kept to as small a portion of the total budget as possible. Clients are given an outline of decision items that must be made. Each decision is marked with a choice of "Client," "Architect," "Client & Architect," or "Contractor." If clients can make decisions without involving architectural time, they have saved money on the project. Examples of the type of decisions on the list are: appliances, plumbing fixtures, light fixtures, and floor finishes.

When reviewing this list with clients, we also provide them with a list of showrooms and dealer stores where they can see the range of items available. Attached to the showroom list are form letters from our office that introduce the client, request that assistance be provided, and outline the information required by our office for installation of the item on the project.

by Italo A. Calpestri, AIA, Alameda, Calif.

ULF Toilets

As of January 1, 1994, all residential toilets are required to be ultra low flush (1.6 gallons per flush). Some of my clients have been concerned about the effectiveness of these toilets. In response, I refer them to a survey of purchasers of ULF toilets done in 1993 by The Los Angeles water department. Among the findings is that 75 percent of the purchasers of ULF toilets indicate they would be "very likely" to repurchase ULF toilets.

In my limited experience with users, it is conceded that the scouring action of ULF fixtures is less

satisfactory than that of LF fixtures. Therefore, toilet brushes may become a routine addition to bathroom furnishings. It is also conceded that pressure-assisted models tend to be noisier than nonpressure-assisted models—however, even these can be noisy if water pressure is high. When possible, I test before specifying.

I inform my clients of these issues prior to construction to prepare them for this slightly diminished performance of this ordinary household fixture.

Anyone interested in "A Survey of Purchaser Opinions About Ultra Low Flush Toilets," published by The Los Angeles Department of Water and Power and prepared by the Wirthin Group in July 1992, may contact DWP Water Conservation Publications, Box 111, Room 1348, Los Angeles, CA 90051.

by Harry Jacobs, FAIA, Oakland

Easy Door Sill Flashing

Most of the residential construction I have been involved with has been wood floor framing over a crawl space. I was taught that the sill area on wood framing needed careful protection from water intrusion and that the proper way to do this was with soldered galvanized sheet metal sill flashing. I have noticed builders using a modified bitumen type product (commonly Bituthene) in lieu of sheet metal. It is easily formed and sealed in place. Builders tell me that it is substantially less costly than sheet metal. I approve of the results and have been using this detail in lieu of sheet metal. It should be noted that this material must not be left exposed to direct sunlight.

by Donald Wardlaw, AIA, Oakland

Techniques

Client to Client Bonding

Current clients love to meet previous clients. When a client travels to a completed project, ostensibly there to see a product or a design feature, the most important benefit is often talking with the previous client who has been through the process, even forming a bond. It is like belonging to a club.

by Bennett Christopherson, AIA, Berkeley

I don't even have a blueprint machine anymore, but find that clients respond well to photocopier copies when they are printed with a blue ink cartridge. It seems to add "extra value"!

Remember:

- Graphic scales should be used
- Engineers call this sheet size "D" and it is possible to purchase precut sheets under this rubric.

by Pamela Webb, AIA, Portland, Oregon

Measuring Existing Conditions

Measuring existing buildings, especially residences, is made much easier with an ultrasonic measuring device. (I use one called Dimension Master Plus from Calculated Industries, 800-854-8075.) It saves snaking 'ape measures under furniture and probably cuts tedious measuring time in half.

by Richard Morrison, AIA, Menlo Park, Calif.

Interviewing Potential Contractors

I have heard many architects complain about working with the contractors their clients choose. If my clients want to look beyond the contractors I refer to them, I try to give them a list of criteria by which to evaluate contractors and ask for the opportunity to interview the additional contractors. I remind them that even the best set of drawings cannot prevent an inexperienced contractor from doing bad work and that the lowest bid price may not end up being the lowest total price if the contractor is impossible to work with.

When I interview these contractors, I look at their work, discuss how I typically administer a contract, and try to determine if I think we will work well with one another. I then verify my gut reaction with other architect references if possible.

I tell the clients if I have any hesitation about working with a specific contractor. At the same time, I remind them that the final decision and responsibility is theirs because (at least in my state) the contract for construction is between the owner and the contractor. Though I may not agree with the final choice the owners make, I have acted as their agent.

by Deborah Lane, AIA, Oakland

Small Sheet Reprise

Regarding the "small sheet size" in Tip and Techniques, page 6, Spring 1994 issue, I would like to add the following:

My "large" sheet size in the office is 22"x34" instead of the standard 24"x36". This means that I can draw on a larger sheet for projects too big for an 11"x17", but when I get a half-size reduction original, I can then reproduce it on a copier on an 11"x17", all the notes will be present, and it will be scalable.

Small Projects Professional Interest Area

1994 Advisory Group

Chair: Gabriel Durand-Hollis, AIA
Phone: (210) 377-3306 Fax: (210) 377-3365

Rosemary A. McMonigal, AIA
Phone: (612) 331-1244 Fax: (612) 331-1079

Donald Wardlaw, AIA
Phone: (510) 268-9524 Fax: (510) 268-0964

Professional Interest Area Staff

Director: Christopher R. Clark, AIA
Phone: (202) 626-7537 Fax: (202) 626-7518

Assistant Director: Candace M. Kerman
Phone: (202) 626-7311 Fax: (202) 626-7518

PIA Communications Staff

Assistant Director: Linda Hayes
Phone: (202) 626-7311 Fax: (202) 626-7518

Publications

These AIA publications provide relevant information to small-projects practitioners. They are available through the AIA Press catalog and Bookstore or by calling 800-365-ARCH (2724).

Current Practices in Small Firm Management: An Architect's Notebook

James R. Franklin, FAIA

This timely hands-on book, based on the successful "optimizing the small firm" workshops, explains how to improve competitive position by spending less time on management and more time providing clients with quality architecture. It is a valuable reference filled with management tips and ideas that have worked for other architects. (190 pages; Order #R942)

How to Start Your Own Firm Kit

James R. Franklin, FAIA

This "kit" version addresses issues vital to setting up a firm and includes the complete text of **Current Practices in Small Firm Management**. (230 pages; Order #R942-CS)

Small-Projects Documents

A105/A205—Standard Form of Agreement Between Owner and Contractor for a Small Project and General Conditions of the Contract for Construction of a Small Project with instruction sheet wrapped (1993). (two-document set)

B155—Standard Form of Agreement Between Owner and Architect for a Small Project with instruction sheet wrapped (1993). (Small-Projects Documents may be purchased from your local AIA Documents Distributor or by calling 800-365-ARCH (2724).

Contributors Needed

Do you have an article or tip idea that you would like to share with your peers? The Small Projects PIA Newsletter is seeking contributions of articles of interest to small-projects architects, individual small-projects architect profiles, and tips on small-projects practice.

We will publish a selection of these in each newsletter. The remaining articles, tips, and profiles will be published periodically as a collection entitled "Notes From the Field."

Please send your ideas, tips, and articles on a 5¼" or 3½" disk—along with illustrative photos, drawings, and charts—to: Small Projects PIA, Candace M. Kerman, The American Institute of Architects, 1735 New York Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20006-5292. Have any questions or comments? Contact Kerman at (202) 626-7311, fax (202) 626-7518.