



Getting Started



The best way to begin a new project is for you--the owner--to reflect on what you bring to it: knowledge, experience, needs, desires, aspirations, and personal opinions. You also provide the resources to realize your expectations.

Naturally, every owner starts from a different outlook. Some have had vast experience with design and construction and know what they want and how to go about getting it. Many owners have much less experience.

Whatever your situation, it makes sense to begin with some self-examination to assess what you already know about your project and what you will establish with your architect's help. The questions outlined below can serve as a guide.

You don't need firm or complete answers to these questions at this point. Indeed, your architect will help you think them through. A general understanding of where you are, however, will help you select the best architect for the project.

Ask yourself these questions:

1. What activities do you expect to house in the project? Do you have specific ideas on how to translate these activities into specific spaces and square footage areas? In any event, an architect with experience in your particular building type can help you immensely to refine your design program (the collection of parameters from which design is derived).
2. Has a site been established, or will this decision also be a subject of discussion with the architect and others?
3. Have you and those with whom you are talking fixed a construction schedule and budget?
4. What are your design aspirations? What thought have you given to the design message and amenities you are seeking in this project?
5. What are your overall expectations for the project? What are your motivations, both basic and high-minded, and what role does this project play in achieving your overall goals?
6. How do you make decisions? Will a single person sign off on decisions? Do you have a building committee?
7. How much information do you need to make decisions?
8. Where will the resources come from to create and operate this project? (Your architect can help you considerably here, for instance, to tap into reliable capital assistance or leverage modest first-cost upgrades into enormous life-cycle savings.)
9. How much experience do you have in design and construction? Have you done this before? If so, where have you been most successful, and where were you disappointed?

> [Selecting an Architect](#)