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architectural fees for
homes and buildings
explained

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Commercial Architectural Fees

Commercial Architectural Fees is about what the typical rates people and organizations and governmental agencies routinely pay for various commercial architectural services. In particular, this webpage focuses on commercial, rather than residential project types. However, it needs to be remembered that residential projects do fall within Group 5 complexity.



(<http://architecturalfees.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/commercial-architectural-fees-2.jpg>)

COST OF CONSTRUCTION	% BASIC FEES IN BLDG COMPLEXITY GROUP				
	1	2	3	4	5
	(least complex -----> most complex)				
up to \$100k	8%	9%	10%	11%	12%
\$100k+ to \$200k	7%	8%	9%	10%	11%
\$200k+ to \$300k	6%	7%	8%	9%	10%
\$300k+ to \$400k	5.9%	6.9%	7.9%	8.9%	9.9%
\$400k+ to \$500k	5.8%	6.8%	7.8%	8.8%	9.8%
\$500k+ to \$600k	5.7%	6.7%	7.7%	8.7%	9.7%
\$600k+ to \$700k	5.6%	6.6%	7.6%	8.6%	9.6%
\$700k+ to \$800k	5.5%	6.5%	7.5%	8.5%	9.5%
\$800k+ to \$900k	5.4%	6.4%	7.4%	8.4%	9.4%
\$900k+ to \$1M	5.3%	6.3%	7.3%	8.3%	9.3%
\$1M+ to \$1.25M	5.2%	6.2%	7.2%	8.2%	9.2%
\$1.25M+ to \$1.5M	5.1%	6.1%	7.1%	8.1%	9.1%
\$1.5M+ to \$1.75M	5.0%	6.0%	7.0%	8.0%	9.0%
\$1.75M+ to \$2M	4.9%	5.9%	6.9%	7.9%	8.9%
\$2M+ to \$2.5M	4.8%	5.8%	6.8%	7.8%	8.8%
\$2.5M+ to \$3M	4.7%	5.7%	6.7%	7.7%	8.7%
\$3M+ to \$3.5M	4.6%	5.6%	6.6%	7.6%	8.6%
\$3.5M+ to \$4M	4.5%	5.5%	6.5%	7.5%	8.5%
\$4M+ to \$5M	4.4%	5.4%	6.4%	7.4%	8.4%
\$5M+ to \$6M	4.3%	5.3%	6.3%	7.3%	8.3%
\$6M+ to \$8M	4.2%	5.2%	6.2%	7.2%	8.2%
\$8M+ to \$10M	4.1%	5.1%	6.1%	7.1%	8.1%
\$10M+ to \$12M	4.0%	5.0%	6.0%	7.0%	8.0%
\$12M+ to \$14M	3.9%	4.9%	5.9%	6.9%	7.9%
\$14M+ to \$16M	3.8%	4.8%	5.8%	6.8%	7.8%
\$16M+ to \$18M	3.7%	4.7%	5.7%	6.7%	7.9%
\$18M+ to \$20M	3.6%	4.6%	5.6%	6.6%	7.6%
\$20M+ to \$22M	3.5%	4.5%	5.5%	6.5%	7.5%
\$22M+ to \$24M	3.4%	4.4%	5.4%	6.4%	7.4%
\$24M+ to \$27M	3.3%	4.3%	5.3%	6.3%	7.3%
\$27M+ to \$30M	3.2%	4.2%	5.2%	6.2%	7.2%
\$30M+ to \$33M	3.1%	4.1%	5.1%	6.1%	7.1%
\$33M+ to \$36M	3.0%	4.0%	5.0%	6.0%	7.0%
\$36M+ to \$39M	2.9%	3.9%	4.9%	5.9%	6.9%
\$39M+ to \$42M	2.8%	3.8%	4.8%	5.8%	6.8%
\$42M+ to \$46M	2.7%	3.7%	4.7%	5.7%	6.7%
\$46M+ to \$50M	2.6%	3.6%	4.6%	5.6%	6.6%
\$50M+ and up	2.5%	3.5%	4.5%	5.5%	6.5%

In the chart above, "k"= thousands, "M"= Millions.

LEVEL OF COMPLEXITY

This is a tried and true method of understanding the relative amount of detail, and therefore, amount of work, or hours, that an architect can devote to creating a project design and set of Construction Documents. Construction Documents usually consist of Working Drawings and Specifications. There are also further Contract Documents that include the architect's advice and counsel in developing forms of agreement between the owner and the contractor and other other consultants and entities.

The level of complexity of architectural projects is illustrated here:

Architectural Project Level of Complexity (<http://architecturalfees.com/project-complexity/>).

The reason this is important is that various organizations assign higher or lower percentage fee rates to the project type, based on the project Level of Complexity. So, it is first important to assign a Level of Complexity to the project under consideration. The referenced chart ranges from Group1 (Least Complex) to Group 5 (Most Complicated). Understanding this, we can then begin to understand the fee ranges on the various charts that organizations around the world and North America associated with the project type.

For a long time, 6% of the cost of construction was the magic fee rate for a lot of commercial architectural work. However, this has changed, moving into the 8% range for many project types and even higher, due to the continuing complexity being built into buildings these days. However, the greater the construction cost, the lower fees are, because at the lowest level, it does actually cost more to produce a project because of the basic tasks an architect must perform for any project to provide a reasonable set of documents and design effort.

USA State governments are a fairly reasonable standard by which to judge fee rates, as they want a good value for the use of state funds, and they also understand that they are employing some of the state taxpayers to design the projects. Therefore, the rates established seem like a good median range for many commercial projects across the USA, North America and possibly globally. These entities appear to agree of the broad cross section of fees and project complexities.

The chart above is largely based on State Governments in the USA. These can be seen here: [Other Fee Sources](http://architecturalfees.com/other-fee-sources/) (<http://architecturalfees.com/other-fee-sources/>).

Architectural projects of all types of complexity (including SFR (Single Family Residential) are represented in the chart above, because SFR fall under the Group 5 category (the most complex).

Based on the chart above, the following ranges of architectural fees result for these various project types for BASIC SERVICES (exclusive of optional additional services, depending on the organization's policies):

GROUP 5 PROJECT FEES

(Single Family Residences, specialized decorative buildings, custom furniture):

6.5% architectural Basic Fee for Over \$50 million construction cost, to:

12% architectural Basic Fee for \$100,000 construction cost and under.

this means, using this chart, that a:

\$500,000 house may have an architectural Basic Services Fee of 9.8%

\$750,000 house may have an architectural Basic Services Fee of 9.5%

\$1M house may have an architectural Basic Services Fee of 9.3%

\$1.5M house: 9.1%

\$2M house: 8.9%

\$3M house: 8.7%

\$4M house: 8.5%

\$5M house: 8.4%

GROUP 4 PROJECT FEES

(Aquariums, auditoriums, art galleries, college buildings with special facilities, communications buildings, special schools, theaters and similar facilities):

5.5% for over \$50M construction cost to:

11% for up to \$100,000 construction cost.

GROUP 3 PROJECT FEES

(College classroom facilities, Convention Centers, Prisons, Extended Care Facilities, Gymnasiums, Hospitals, Institutional Dining Halls, Laboratories, Libraries, Medical Schools, Medical Office Buildings and Clinics, Mental Institutions, Office Buildings with Tenant Improvements, Parks, Playgrounds, Recreation Facilities, Police Stations, Public Health Centers, Research Facilities, Schools (elementary/middle), Stadiums, Welfare Buildings, Central Utility Plants, Water Supply Facilities, Sewage Treatment Plants, Electrical Sub-Stations and Distribution Systems, Roads, Bridges, Major Site Improvements as independent projects):

4.5% for over \$50M construction cost to:

10% for up to \$100,000 construction cost.

GROUP 2 PROJECT FEES

(Armories, Apartments, Cold Storage Facilities, Dormitories, Exhibition Halls, Hangers, Manufacturing/Industrial Plants, Office Buildings without tenant improvements, Printing Plants, Public Markets, Service Garages):

3.5% for over \$50M construction cost to:

9% for up to \$100,000 construction cost.

GROUP 1 PROJECT FEES

(Industrial Buildings without special facilities, Parking Structures and repetitive garages, Simple Loft Structures, Warehouses without automated apparatus, other Utilitarian Buildings):

2.5% for over \$50M construction cost to:

8% for up to \$100,000 construction cost.

RENOVATIONS: it should be mentioned that the fee chart above (which was derived largely from State project fee schedules in the USA) does NOT include increases in fee percentage for renovations of each type of project. It Should, but it does not. Therefore, it may be a reasonable rule of thumb to INCREASE the percentage fee for the project type by perhaps two shifts to the right (increasing the complexity level) to result in at least a 2% escalation in fee to handle some of the increased requirements involved with renovation projects, which nearly always require more effort than new projects. Renovation projects always involve some form of investigation and discovery, which requires more time on the part of the architect to understand what is existing in order to add to it or move it or remove it. It is always easier to build new, from the architect's perspective, than to have to understand what exists, then how to carefully change certain portions of that to have new features installed and added.

Therefore, Renovation projects will nearly always add to the complexity and therefore the hours an architect will need to spend on a project, and for that reason, the percentages for renovations are usually higher than for new projects. There is no hard and fast rule about this increase in percentages, but for discussion's sake this might typically be somewhere on the order of perhaps 2% to 5% more than for New Projects. This can and will vary, depending on the project. For instance: hospital renovation projects can be significantly more than for a warehouse renovation.

RECORD DRAWINGS ADDITIONAL SERVICES FOR RENOVATION PROJECTS:

There is a wild card Additional Service that can and will increase the percentages indicated above: RECORD DRAWINGS. See Architect Services (<http://architecturalfees.com/architect-services/>) for an explanation of Record Drawings. These are needed for most renovation projects. These are almost always provided at an hourly rate, above and beyond other services being provided. This is one of the reasons that Renovation projects are often more demanding and therefore, more expensive, in terms of architectural fees than new projects. Regarding Record Drawings: even if the owner has existing Paper drawings, the architect will still have to redraw those, typically from scratch, on the architect's computers, in order to have usable electronic drawings. Very few architects these days draw anything on paper, certainly few documents that end up being used for actual Construction Drawings. Most architects create their designs, drawings and specifications on computers. Therefore, if there are not electronic construction documents accurately depicting the existing projects arrangements of features, the architect will have to perform work to measure and understand existing conditions, usually through field measuring, then convert those field notes into computerized drawings that become usable to the architect during his or her creation of the renovated design.

It is the rare owner who actually possesses electronic drawings, particularly for a residential project, and in the software compatible (usable) with the architect's latest software, and that they actually indicate what was built. There are usually numerous changes during construction and the new architect will typically need to revise any documents provided by the owner for the new project in order to have a reasonably reliable depiction of existing conditions from which to proceed with the new design work.

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