



THE KASTROP GROUP, INC.
A R C H I T E C T S

ESTIMATING POLICY

In working with a wide variety of clients, we at The Kastrop Group, Inc. Architects have found that true customer service is not a one-size-fits-all proposition. While some clients wish to pay for all of the “bells and whistles” (e.g., computer models, color renderings, etc.), some clients prefer “quick and dirty” (just detailed enough to get a building permit). Either approach is equally valid.

Architecture is an artistic endeavor, and as such, includes a necessary thorough and detailed communication between the Client and the Architect in order to have a common vision of the project. Technically, this is called the “scope of work”. We will provide specifics about what is included for the estimated fees.

The approach we like to take is to get an honest assessment of the Client’s overall budget, to assist us in planning the scope of work for the project. Costs increase depending on the complexity and level of detail for the plans. For example, if you are building it yourself, instead of using a contractor, we can probably take some shortcuts, since you know what you want to build and we don’t have to detail it for a contractor.

There is no such thing as a “perfect” set of drawings, but if the Contractor is willing to work with us in communicating any issues of concern, then constructions delays and “change orders” can be avoided. For example, a Contractor may ask us to “specify” particular materials with which he/she is familiar, or has readily available. Or the Contractor may tell us that certain design elements can be “roughed out” in general, because they will work with you, the Client, on exactly what it will look like while it is being built. This is often true of cabinetry, and other Contractor specialty work. The point is that the more trust there is between the Client, the Architect, and the Contractor, the more “economical” the drawings can be. This is one reason to consider hiring a general contractor to be a part of the design process, rather than waiting until the drawings are complete. (You can still have contractors bid on the final design before committing to the construction contract.)

The scope of work is also heavily impacted by how complicated the permit process becomes. Some cities are extremely demanding about their requirements for presentations and drawings. Obviously, the more the requirements, the higher the costs. If your project needs a code variance, soils engineering, or other mitigation, the time and costs will be higher than a project that can be approved by the Planning Department “over the counter”. We will discuss

options with you, but we are restricted to what your city or county officials determine the requirements to be.

Sometimes the original estimate will have to be revised upward if the project encounters an unforeseen obstacle. We will then inform you of the issue and ask for your approval of the revised fees. If the project scope exceeds your budget, or becomes unrealistic to accomplish, you can, at any time, instruct us to quit work on the project. You are responsible only for services performed until the date of termination of the contract. In order to avoid this outcome, we often suggest that complex projects be separated into construction phases, thereby getting a permit to complete some, if not all, of the desired work. If you have knowledge of possible problems (such as difficulties a neighboring property has experienced), please share them with us so that we can anticipate and avoid pitfalls.

Consultants for engineering, Title-24 analysis, sound or lighting design, landscape, etc. may also be part of the design team and you should budget for them in the “soft costs” of the project in addition to the “hard” construction costs. The Kastrop Group, Inc. Architects has established effective working relationships with a number of consultants in these fields and are happy to provide recommendations. We can also provide you with approximate typical fees for services that might be required on your project.

On a typical residential project we will provide you with an initial estimate with a “not to exceed” dollar figure for the Existing Conditions and Preliminary Design phases. (See the “Architectural Design Phases” page for more information.) This will give you a firm idea of what it will cost to get the ideas for your project discussed thoroughly and designed enough for you to get a preliminary estimate from an experienced General Contractor. Based on this preliminary information you can decide whether the project is “just right” or whether your budget allows the project to become more substantial or scaled back. Once you have a design direction determined and approved, we will give you another estimate for the Design Development and Construction Documents phases. This is the amount of work necessary for you to receive your building permit and other agency approvals (if required). Our two-step process protects you from unpleasant surprises common in a one estimate approach. (See “The Lowdown on Pricing” and “How an Architect Can Fit Into Your Budget” articles.)

The key to a successful project is to minimize surprises! We will make every effort to anticipate and inform you of concerns as early as possible so that you will not come across an unpleasant problem later. This sometimes results in “sticker shock”, especially if you have talked to others who might have given you a lesser “ballpark” figure. We suggest that you get estimates in writing, with a detailed scope of work, so that you can compare costs accurately. We are always happy to give you lots of information about your estimate, and what we took into consideration in making it. If for any reason you have concerns about the estimate we have provided or how it fits into your budget, we are willing to discuss ways to save money with you. Let us help.

Don't hesitate to call!