

CONSTRUCTION TIP SHEET: **COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS INCLUDING MULTI-FAMILY APARTMENTS**

This Tip Sheet reflects code requirements of the 2015 International Residential Code (IRC) and the 2015 International Building Code (IBC)

Note- The intent of this Tip Sheet is to provide a general understanding of the code requirements and does not address the subject in great detail.

When do I have to hire an Architect?

In Maine, residential building or renovation projects involving single-family or two-family homes do not require the services of an architect. Commercial, industrial, and institutional construction (along with multi-family residential) are another story, as they **DO** require a design professional.

With those types of projects, requirements for the involvement of an architect vary based on how the structure is categorized and the size of the building.

The architect is responsible for ensuring the site plan and all structures meet building code and follow all applicable municipal ordinances. As project lead, the architect will also be responsible for signing off on the final construction.

Sometimes you will need an engineer AND an architect.

An engineer will design the structural drawings and the engineer's stamp ensures that the structural design will work. Whereas the architect's stamp will ensure that the building is designed to meet the code based on the use and occupancy.

Architects create designs for new construction projects, alterations and redevelopments. They use their specialist construction knowledge and high-level drawing skills to design buildings that are functional, safe, sustainable and aesthetically pleasing.

An experienced architect brings a lot of knowledge and power to your project. Since they are familiar with local building codes, you are set up for success from the get-go. In addition, they can suggest different materials that could help save money.

Engaging an architect early in the planning stage saves time and streamlines the process. In gaining an understanding of the site or existing building and your vision, an architect will create a scope of work that organizes tasks and meets your overall project goals.

An architect is experienced in researching and evaluating building and code requirements to ensure that your project is designed to meet regulations. An architect can help you plan for project costs based on related projects and experience, and can often save money by designing a more efficient building. They can provide options for cost savings through design, phasing, or materials from the

LEWISTON ME

planning and design stage through to final construction. While hiring an architect may add cost up front, overall it adds value to the project by creating a well-planned and detailed project that addresses budget issues throughout the process and avoids unexpected circumstances in construction. Making changes on paper in the planning process is much cheaper and easier than during construction when the contractor is standing there with hammer in hand wondering what to do next!

Why do I need an Architect for an existing building?

Depending on the condition and configuration of an existing building, opening a new business can be simple and straightforward or it can be complicated, time consuming, expensive, or not even feasible.

Are you changing the occupancy or use of your space?

What is a change of use or occupancy?

Every building is given an occupancy classification when it is originally built. Each classification has different building code requirements, which relate to the type of hazard or uses in the building. A change of occupancy is a change in the building's use that places the building in a different division of the same group of occupancies or in a different group of occupancies. For example, an office building may become a day care center or a store. Another less obvious example of a change of occupancy is when a restaurant that has seating for less than 50 wants to increase the number of seats to 50 or more. A change of use is a change in the building's use within the same occupancy, but increases the building's occupant load or other factors that may have different building code requirements. For example, a change from an office to a café is a change within the same occupancy classification, but is a change of use because the occupant load is increased.

Change of use or occupancy of a building:

Current code requirements must be met, including: addressing accessibility for new work and removing existing barriers, potential seismic upgrades, potential addition of sprinkler systems, and others.

Change of use or occupancy of a building in certain locations:

May require parking, bike parking, pedestrian amenities and landscaping depending on use and location of property within certain zones.

Alterations to exterior:

May require Development Review or Historic Preservation Review (land use review) in certain locations or for designated historic buildings

You may find it valuable to hire an architect to help you with your plans. It is important that your architect or engineer is familiar with change of occupancy code requirements as well as your type of building and business.