

## Questions to Ask Your Architect

The design of a fine home or the landscape development of a residential site to enhance outdoor living is one of the most exciting and challenging construction projects because it deals with your personal needs, your personal space, your family, and your daily living routine. Whether you choose to work with **Abell & Associates Architects** or some other firm, we hope the following topics will inform you and assist you in making your choice.

*Aren't all architects about the same? Don't you all have the same license and training?*

Unfortunately, the construction industry is populated with residential designers and some pretenders who have "architectural training" but are not licensed architects or licensed landscape architects. Don't be afraid to ask for license numbers and dates of registration.

*James Abell, AZ Licensed Architect 11544, 1978*

*James Abell, AZ Licensed Landscape Architect 14146, 1981*

*Do professional associations matter?*

Yes. Like other licensed professions and their associations, many architects choose to belong to the American Institute of Architects beyond their state licensure. While not mandatory for practice, membership in the AIA requires on-going continuing education for membership, requires adherence to a code of professional conduct slightly higher than most state licensure laws, and provides a forum to air concerns beyond a state licensing agency. *Mr. Abell has been an AIA member since 1976.*

*How long have you been in business under this exact name? Have you ever been party to a lawsuit?*

Abell & Associates was founded in 1979 and has operated under the same name and same management continuously since inception. We have never been named in a lawsuit in 26 years.

*How is compensation determined?*

There is no set approach or answer regarding design fees. Obviously, it varies depending of the level of service, the amounts of time spent on each phase of service, and the level of detail provided in programming, in design, in preparation of construction drawings, and finally, how much liaison is needed during construction. Typically for a fine custom home, the four phases listed above can cost between 9% and 12% of the total construction cost. Some clients prefer to compensate their architect hourly for programming and design, then ask for fixed fees for the construction drawings phase [because the scope of activity is now clearly defined], and then return to hourly compensation for construction and field liaison.

*What distinguishes your firm from the rest?*

We are very different than most firms because we are licensed as both architects and landscape architects, taking a total environmental approach. We are also different because we put more emphasis on interior architecture where our clients spend most of their time, letting the exteriors of our homes remain simple, expressive of their surroundings., and in many cases, understated. We are also different because we seek collaboration with our clients and let our clients needs and intuition guide the design process. Finally, we are different because of Mr. Abell's acknowledged leadership in the architectural profession. In addition to the firms' design awards, there are only a handful of Arizona architects who have received the prestigious Arizona Architect's Medal and have been elevated to the national AIA College of Fellows.

**Abell & Associates**  
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