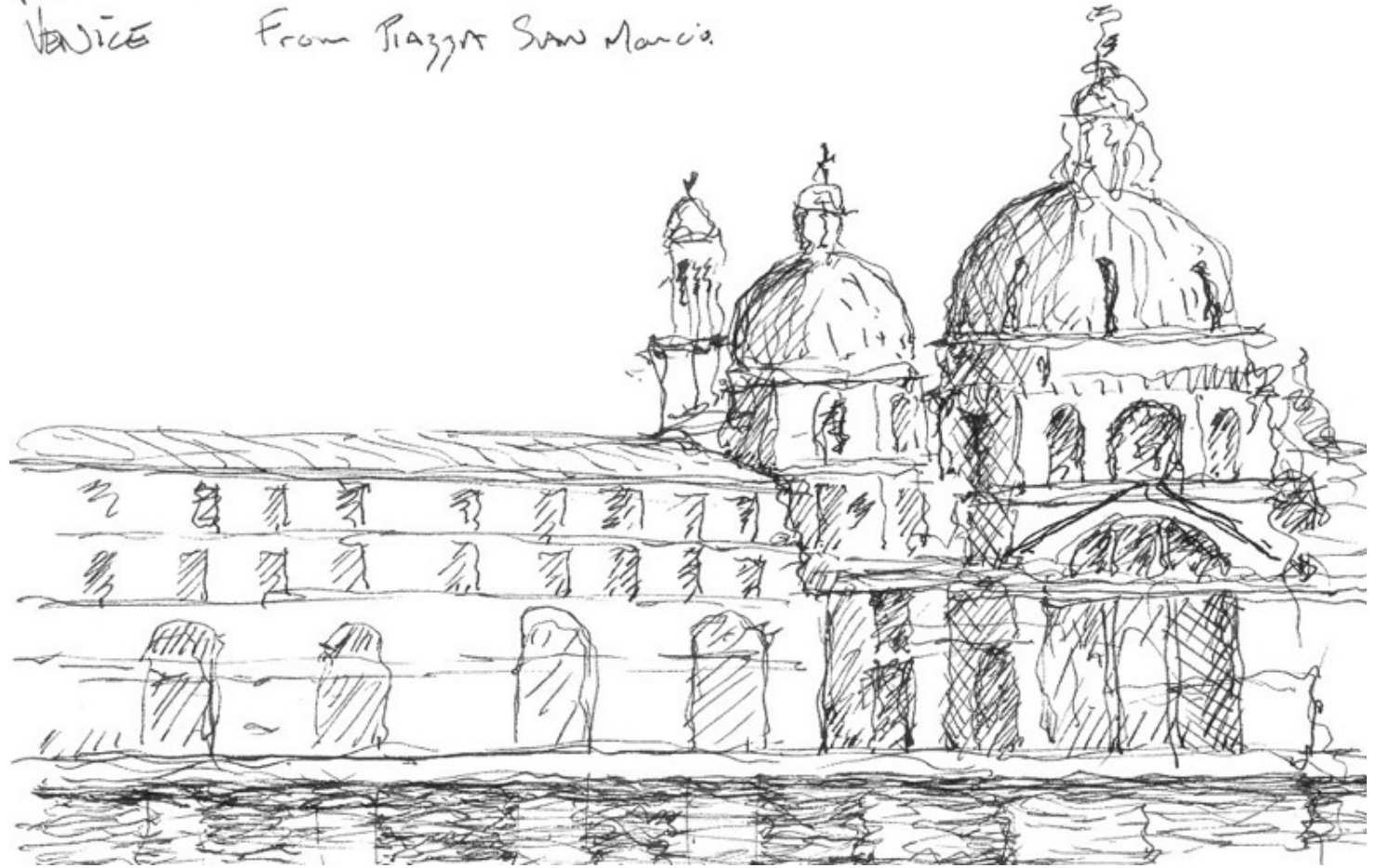


SANTA MARIA DELLA SALUTE:  
VENICE From Piazza San Marco



Selecting your

Architect



Nothing is more exciting than starting a new building project and nothing will affect the success of the project more than selecting the right architect.

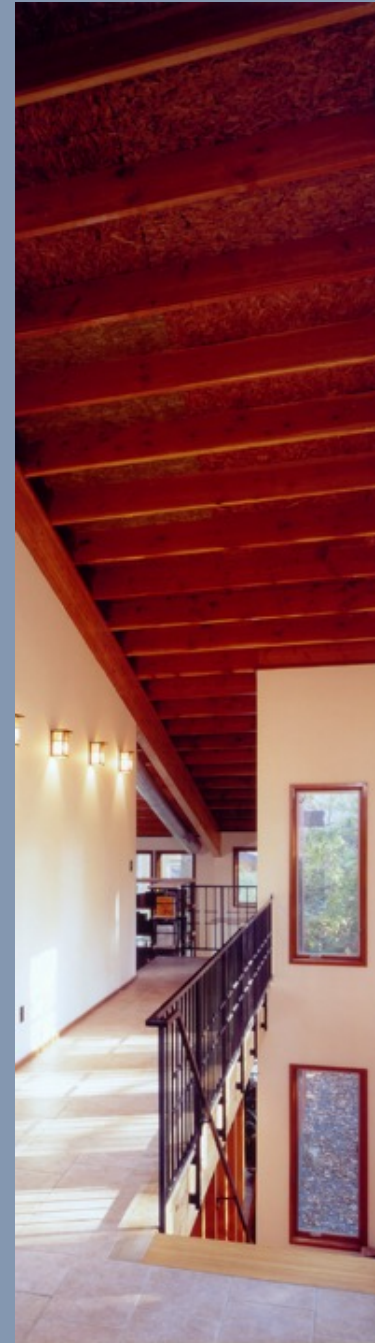
The right architect will make it easy for you to move confidently through the process from the beginning of design through the completion of construction.

The right architect will watch your back and investment; both the financial and personal investment — that you make into your project.

This guide will help you analyze the personality, design strategy, and communication skills of prospective candidates, giving you the confidence to select the right person to protect and maximize your investment.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ed'.

Ed Rahme AIA, LEED-AP



# In the Spotlight

Wednesday, September 7, 2016

*'We have the ability to make the world a better place'*

## Ed Rahme: An architecture of integrity

By Richard L. Goss  
Staff Writer

More than 50 years ago, while he was still in school, Kennot Square architect Ed Rahme came across an ancient stone arch called the Sun Dagger. Built by the Anasazi Indians on the Fajada Butte in northwest New Mexico, it dated as far back as the 10th century, and became an inspiration for how he approaches his profession. Three large stone slabs lean against a cliff, channeling light and shadow onto two spiral petroglyphs etched into the cliff. Throughout the year, these "daggers" of light served as a calendar for the Anasazi. They marked the winter solstice, the summer solstice and both equinoxes, charting the optimal times for planting and harvest.

"The secret to building modern design with history is to understand the principles of both," Rahme said. "If you look at an old house with the intention to do a modern renovation, it can be progress, but it has to be of the collection original, and use that the transition between spaces in these structures were elongated. These spaces within spaces suggested functions along a primary. Rahme's first design gave the primary a transformation that was both modern and respectful of the total architectural influence."

Rahme, a LEED-accredited architect, worked with Delaware County Community College on a project that says about you? If you're building something with such natural materials, you're building something with integrity. Integrity is the one word that best describes something beautiful. It may not be your profession, but at least you have to acknowledge its power."

At a time when modern architecture has begun to ignore the forces of nature, Rahme clings to them as if they were his tether to make beautiful buildings. He believes that in the last half-century, America has lost its lead in the world's architectural innovation, while around the globe, architects are doing not only ground-breaking, they are done with respect for history and the environment.

"America has been functioning for so long an architectural habit," Rahme said. "You can tell a lot about a country by its architecture, and in the United States, a lot of buildings are built for no other reason than profit. Unfortunately, an architect with respect for the building," he said. "America has been doing into the water of its architecture and losing its reflection for too long. When leaders begin to believe their own press, then leadership is usually taken by someone else."

"More times, people build buildings as a means to an end, rather than as an end in themselves. When I see people building something as an end in itself, that's when I know they are trying to achieve something great. Good design requires a lot of interaction with the client, but when you're done and you feel you have achieved something great together."



Stigpen is an ultra-green teaching space prepared for Delaware County Community College.



Rahme designed the office entry and reception area for Beery Ho & Associates in Springfield, Va.



The Pench House in Takoma Park, Md., was designed to maximize its views.

It is both aggressive and simple, Rahme thought, a way to look at the earth, and wind and the stars to create a powerful composition. "The Sun Dagger shows a basic understanding of our place on earth," he said. "They culture understood the importance of the movement of the sun throughout the year. The changing light was meant to sustain their life."

Rahme, a proponent of THINK Architecture, incorporates the movement of the wind, sun and moon into the projects he designs. Incorporating the modern architecture, Rahme creates places and spaces for universities, health care companies, businesses, hospitality services, restaurants, faith-based organizations, as well as private residences. Several of his designs are the local map: The Duquesne African Art Center at Lincoln University, a chic cafe in Wilmington, and the proposed Stigpen building — a teaching space for the Delaware County Community College.

"People talk about architecture as if they are building it in a vacuum, but it should be considered as an extension of nature," Rahme said. "What I do is take bits and pieces of nature and translate them into something else. As a builder builds a dam by rearranging materials around him, I consider architecture in the same way, but a little more sophisticated."



The Benjamin African Art Center at Lincoln University includes an annex that Rahme designed.

## Finding an Architect

Like many fields, word of mouth one way to look for an architect. Ask family, friends, and professional colleagues for referrals.

Additionally, professional organizations (like the American Institute of Architects), general contractors, interior designers and other trade personnel are great sources to find architects.

A third method of finding architects is to search for publications. Newspaper articles, magazine articles, web publications, etc. will tell you who the architects are and what they stand for.

Be sure to visit your candidate's website. Look at their previous work — is it a creative solution for the site? Is it environmentally sound? Can you see a distinct level of quality and detail?

Once you are intrigued by an architect's work, start a conversation. Make an appointment for a consultation. Meeting face to face will help you decide if that architect is a good fit.

- Referrals
- Contractors
- Professional Organizations
- other Professionals
- Publications

## Interviewing an Architect

The most important attribute of any architect is his or her curiosity. The architect has to be truly interested in how to transform your ideas into a beautiful architectural solution.

For this reason, the word “why” is essential. If the architect believes in why you want something then you have taken your first step to achieving your goals, together. This inquisitive-ness should be apparent during your first consultation.

Communication skills are next. An architect has two ears and one mouth... and should use them in that proportion. When you speak, do you feel that you are being heard... and understood?

“An architect has two ears and one mouth...  
...and should use them in that proportion.”





## Identifying *Your* Project Architect

Signing a contract with an architect who represents their architectural firm does not necessarily mean that they will your contact person through the project.

Be sure that you ask to meet the *Project Architect* before making any final decisions. This is the person with whom you need to feel comfortable. This is the person who you will depend on to make your dream a reality!

Being able to communicate freely and openly with your Project Architect is vital to the success of your project. You should share a clear understanding of your goals and feel completely comfortable.

In most of the larger firms, the person who you meet through the interview process will not be the person assigned to your project. Be careful of the bait and switch from interviewing to working!!

Who will be your  
*contact*  
from start to finish?

## Insist on 3-D

While 2-D drawings are helpful, models help clients visualize buildings much more effectively. Insist that your architect work with physical models. They bring clarity instead of confusion to your decision making.

In some instances, such as building in an urban environment, we model the adjacent buildings so that our clients can see how their new building will fit into the context. Be confident!





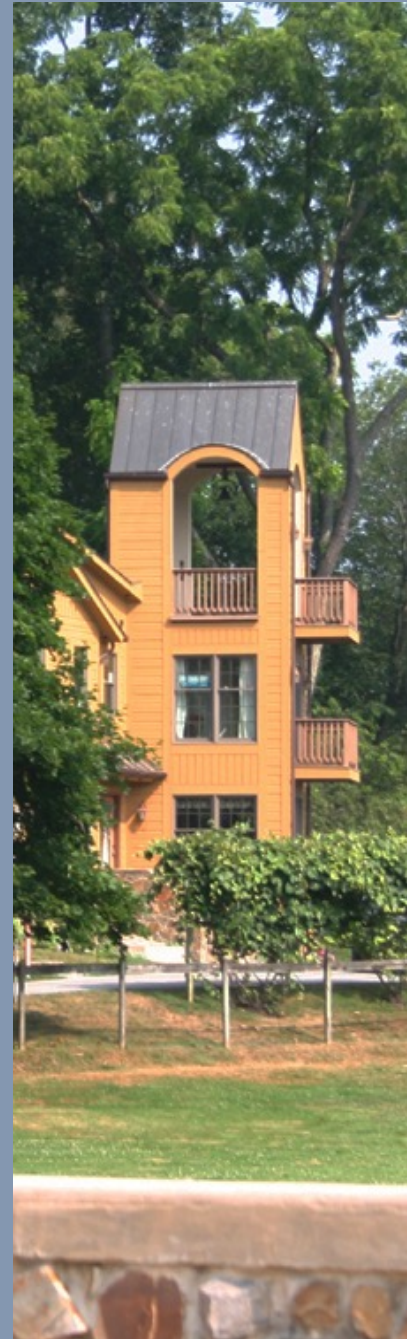
## Evaluating an Architectural Firm

Conceptual renderings and construction documents are not the only services architectural and planning firms offer.

Ask your architect if there are any additional services offered and how they could be useful to you for your particular project. If a firm doesn't offer a requested service, they should be able to refer a firm that does. A typical architectural firm provides:

- Project Feasibility Studies
- Space Programming
- Master Planning
- Evaluation of Potential Building Sites
- Architectural Design
- Traditional and Computer Renderings
- 3-D Computer Visualization
- Comprehensive Construction Documents
- LEED® Coordination & Certification Assistance
- Order of Magnitude Cost Estimates
- Fixtures, Furnishings & Equipment Specifications
- Construction Administration

Do they offer  
Additional Services  
that would help with  
your project?







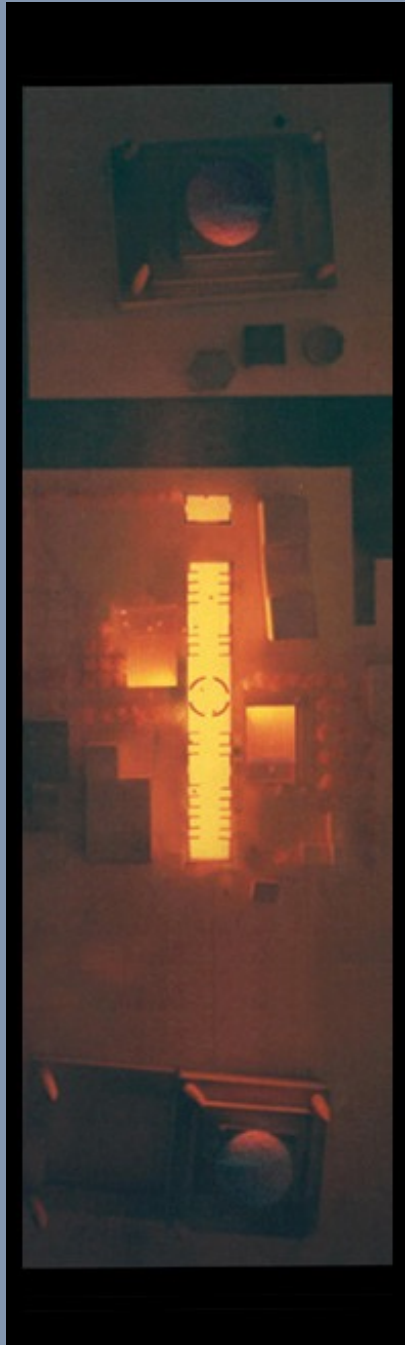
## Choosing a Contractor

An experienced architect should have a preferred list of contractors. Your architect should guide you through the interview process to help you select the right contractor for your project. Even if you already have a preferred contractor, speak to others to solicit their input into the best approach regarding the particulars of your project.

Select your contractor at the beginning of a project while you're designing with your architect. Having a contractor on the team during design helps to evaluate costs throughout the process.

Identify your  
*Contractor*  
during the  
Design Phase





## Determining Fees

Typically, an architect's fee is calculated as a percentage of the project cost. Depending on the services provided, the rate could range from 6 to 15 percent. Examples of project costs include the construction budget, consultant fees for environmental impact studies or structural engineering fees.

The most important thing about fees is transparency. *Insist upon it.*

Typically, **Ed Rahme Architect** works for fixed fees so that our clients can budget their project costs – hard costs and soft costs – in advance.

We also offer what we call our “Ducks-in-a-Row” service at the beginning of any project. This service is a low commitment consultation for an hourly or small fixed fee to help our clients develop an action plan, define their program needs, or even sketch conceptual possibilities for their project.

This fee will be deducted from the final fee once determined.

“The Important Thing  
About Fees  
is Transparency”

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beautiful **Residential**  
extraordinary **Higher Education**  
complex **Institutional**  
cost-effective **Commercial**  
efficient **Parking**



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