

### 3. HIRING AN ARCHITECT

The three red tags on the front door of the residence boldly stated "City of Santa Fe Notice to Stop Work". I immediately began to wonder why the owner had decided not to obtain a permit for the construction. It appeared that the only work being done was replacing windows and patching stucco but is the owner aware of egress requirements out of bedrooms, proper venting of heaters and the numerous other code upgrades that may be required by the City Officials when undertaking a renovation. This individual could have saved both time and money had he only consulted with a qualified licensed Architect.

An Architects mission is simple; provide a safe, clean environment for people to live and work in. This is achieved by the Architect interpreting both his clients needs and the strict city/county code guidelines to develop working drawings that conform to the particular guidelines set out by both the parties mentioned. The drawings are used to obtain a permit and used by the contractor for the actual construction. These drawings also serve many other purposes, probably the most important in a renovation are 1) documenting existing conditions 2) addressing code issues 3) determining budgets by utilizing the drawings to obtain pricing from general contractors, subcontractors and suppliers. The three items listed above hold importance whether a job is small or large. Of course, the larger the job the more requirements and needs that must be met and addressed by an Architect. Sometimes these larger jobs require the Architect to assemble a team of design professionals including, but not limited to, structural, electrical, mechanical and civil engineers, and sometimes interior designers.

Along with translating the clients needs and ensuring code requirements are met, the architect also can help in the bidding/negotiation process with the contractor. Additionally, the architect can observe the physical construction, acting as the client's representative to ensure adherence to the drawings. Every job is unique though and some jobs do not require full architectural services as described above.

Most architects will structure their fees based on what level of services an individual job may require. This makes fees dependent on the particular job and for that reason, fees can vary quite a bit. Don't let architect's fees scare you! Over the

forty to sixty year life cycle of a building, design fees are a small fraction of the overall cost. An architect's expertise can save the owner a substantial amount of maintenance and money over the years.

The final point I'll make about hiring an architect is that with present city/county codes and specific design restrictions, the client typically requires an architect simply to interpret these complex and changing code requirements. Certainly a building or residence owner can not be expected to keep up with landscaping or paving requirements for something as simple as a parking lot, but your architect should be familiar with these.

Now that you've decided to hire an architect be careful in your selection of the firm you choose to work with on your project. You will be working on a personal level with this firm on a small job for possibly a couple months, but on a larger job you could be working together for a few years. So, choose the firm that seems both compatible with your specific needs and one that you are also personally comfortable with. If you are interviewing a larger firm make sure you meet the architect/designer that will be assigned specifically to your job. Always remember the architect is not just concerned about the quality of their design, but also the potential cost-saving and quality of the building you end up with as the client.