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Architectural Plans - What's In, What's Out

Rather than discuss the latest fads in church design, I want to explain what a church should expect to be included in the drawings prepared by an architect. The construction plans should include enough design information that well-qualified sub-contractors, experienced in their field, should be able to bid and construct the facility without having to rely too heavily on the builder and architect during construction. The plans do not so much describe construction techniques, but rather specify materials to be used, acceptable standards, and the scope of the work.

Not every nut and bolt in the project needs to be drawn or specified, but wall sections should be included, as should unusual or critical design elements. Trimwork details may not be included, nor will many of the finish items that the owner may be selecting during construction. Such items are sometimes given a dollar allowance for bidding purposes. The plans may include the specifications, or a separate spec manual may be prepared for larger projects.

It is particularly important for the architect to know if the project will be managed by a pre-selected builder or competitively bid by several general contractors. This will impact the level of detail required of the plans and specifications and will affect the cost of the architectural services. The architect should also know how much the owner will rely on him to handle the bid process and analyze the bids. In any case, keep in mind that a more complete and accurate set of plans will more likely result in an on-time, on-budget project with fewer problems.

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