

## **ARCHITECT SELECTION**

The architect selection process is structured to choose competent architectural firms to conduct feasibility studies and design the project to reflect the requirements of the educational specifications and, to the extent possible, the aesthetic preferences of the school community. Architectural firms interested in competing for the project commission are invited to provide information on their qualifications and experience to an Architect Selection Committee. The committee, which is chaired by the director, Division of Construction, or their designee, and includes the building principal or principal designee, a representative of the school community and central office staff, evaluates the information, interviews likely candidates, selects the best qualified firm for the project, and nominates that firm to the Board of Education to receive the design contract award. The Board may accept or reject the committee's recommendation.

### **Sequence of Events**

1. Completed, approved guideline Educational Specifications for feasibility planning or final educational program specifications for architectural design are received from the Department of Planning and Capital Programming. These specifications define the functional requirements of the project and provide a basis for determining the types of architectural and engineering services that will be required. For interested architectural firms, the specifications provide an indication of the level of effort and skills required to produce a successful final product.
2. Expressions of interest in providing architectural services are solicited from qualified firms by publishing a public notice in a local newspaper for three consecutive days (required by law) and by using other notification methodologies that have been shown to be effective in providing this information to large numbers of qualified firms. A specific time period for interested firms to respond to the solicitation.

During, and only during, the time period defined in the public notice, interested architectural and engineering firms may apply for consideration for a specific project by submitting the following information to the director of the Division of Construction:

- A. A letter of interest in the project signed by an officer of the firm.
- B. Completed, up-to-date U.S. Government Standard Forms 254 and 255. These forms are used by the Federal Government for architect and engineering selection and require applicants to provide the types of information that allow MCPS to make an informed judgment on an applicant's experience and qualifications.
- C. Optional additional information on completed projects and special qualifications.

3. Responses to the Request for Proposals are evaluated by a team of professional designers and construction managers within the Division of Construction. After reviewing all proposals (usually in excess of fifty architectural brochures), this team will recommend three to five firms to the architectural selection committee for interviewing.

Architectural firm interviews will be scheduled for a time and date that is convenient for the selection committee. The interviews will be held during normal business hours at an MCPS central office.

Selection of firms for short-listing and interviews is based on the following criteria:

- A. General competence, including that of proposed consultants
- B. Geographic location of firm and consultants
- C. Past performance on MCPS projects or on similar work elsewhere, especially with regard to errors, omissions, and adherence to budget and schedule limitations
- D. Compatibility of the size of the firm with the size of the proposed project
- E. Indications of the firm's recent total workload and capacity to accomplish the proposed work in the required time
- F. Indications of the firm's understanding of the project's requirements
- G. Special experience, design approach, or other special qualifications
- H. Originality and quality of design of previous work
- I. Firm's financial responsibility
- J. Measures of protection for MCPS against errors and omissions

#### 4. Architectural Selection Committee Interviews Short-listed Firms

Depending on the number of firms to be interviewed, the complexity of the project, and the size of the selection committee, interviews may be scheduled on one or more days. The interviews are structured so that each firm receives an equitable opportunity with the committee to present their qualifications and whatever information they feel makes the firm uniquely qualified for the project. At the conclusion of the presentation, the committee votes on the firm to receive the commission.

#### 5. Appointment by Board of Education

The Director, Division of Construction, negotiates an appropriate fee for services to be provided with the selected firm. The firm and agreed upon fee must be approved by the Board of Education before further design work may begin.

### **THINGS TO REMEMBER IN EVALUATING ARCHITECTS**

Those who make the best presentations or make the best impressions in interviews don't necessarily do the best work.

Focus on substance, not appearance.

Things about a specific building you like or hate may be the result of compromises forced by the client and not a reflection of the architect's talent.

It's important to have confidence in the abilities of the architect, and some are better at hand-holding than others, but the most polite don't necessarily do the best work.

