



The Purpose of Architectural Specifications

There are two parts to an architectural set of construction documents. The first part is a set of line and text working drawings prepared by the architect. These drawings are detailed and include the floor plans, elevations, wall sections, construction notes, finish schedules, hardware schedules and many other drawings that visually depict how the building is going to be built. The second part of the set of construction documents is normally in booklet form and contains the architectural specifications. The ultimate purpose of the specifications is to satisfy the use and the aesthetic requirements of the facility being built. So, what should church lay leaders expect from a good set of architectural specifications?

- 1) The specifications should make sure the products, materials, and systems specified meet relevant national, state, or local codes. Most church lay leaders must rely on their architect for these requirements.
- 2) The specifications should spell out the "aesthetic" expectations of the church leadership. This would include quality expectations, colors, sizes, styles, etc. To make sure the architect meets the expectations of the church leadership, the leadership should review all specifications dealing with aesthetic issues before the project is bid out.
- 3) The ideal specifications should be written to allow as many "comparable product choices and manufacturers" as possible. The specifications should include the provisions of providing an "equal or better value" to the product specified. This gives the church and the contractor the maximum number of options and choices to meet the requirements of the building and creates a more competitive environment than specifying only one product or manufacturer to be used.
- 4) The specifications should include the "performance requirements" for each area of the church. Where traffic flow is the heaviest and the level of use and abuse is the highest, different products will have to be specified to handle the situation. Different performance requirements require different products. Church leaders responsible for the building program need to make sure the architect selected is cognizant of how the building is going to be used and by what age groups in order to ensure the proper products are

specified. Maintenance is a big problem in churches. Making sure you have the right products specified when the church is built will help with minimizing maintenance costs.

5) The specifications should also deal with "product longevity". From the beginning the specification writer needs to consider that the products specified will require service and maintenance. Things will go wrong sooner or later. Therefore, other things that need to be considered when specifying products are: What is the manufacturer's warranty on the product? What is the quality of the product? Does the manufacturer provide maintenance and service if required? Is there a warranty on the product, and if so, what does the warranty cover and for how long does it apply? Will the manufacturer stand behind its product if something happens? What is the manufacturer's reputation?

In summary, the art of specifying the right products, material and systems has become quite complicated due to the vast product market and the rising complexity of the church facilities being designed today. It takes more time than it ever has and it requires the writer of the specifications to have a great deal more knowledge than needed in the past.