



amy green design

## How Long Will My Building Project Take

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# 01 How Long Will My Building Project Take

How long your building project will take varies widely based on how large your project is, how complex it is, if it requires permits from the Department of Buildings (DOB), how well you've set priorities for your project, and if there are unique needs of your building such as remediation that needs to be done on-site or approvals through other organizations such as the Board of Standards and Appeals or Landmarks.

The best way to get an accurate idea of how long your building project will take is to ask the Architect you're interested in working with on the project, as unique conditions and complexities affect the timeline and they can best help advise you on how certain approaches to your project could increase or decrease your project timeline.

The timelines estimated in this guide are for a mid sized project and are not representative of a skyscraper or project as large as a NYC block.

from the timeline estimates in this article's table of contents you'll see a mid-sized remodel or new building project could take 25-65 weeks from start of design to completion of construction depending on size, complexity, permits, board reviews, inspections and materials needed



## 02 Set Priorities for Project: Timeline 0-2 Weeks

People remodel or build for a variety of reasons, from wanting an investment property, to accommodating the size of their growing family, to starting a business, and more.

Your first step in deciding whether you want to move forward with your building or remodel is to determine the priorities of your specific project, how much you want the project to happen, and what possible obstacles that could be in your way. Great Architects such as amy green design can work with you to expedite your project and remove obstacles.

Knowing up front what you want will help you and your Architect work together most effectively from the start and avoid delays that could occur if you ask them to say design the space as a three bedroom home then later want them to change it to a four bedroom home because you weren't clear with yourself nor fully decided upon your priorities for the project.

Separating "must-have" items from "wish-list" items for the priorities of the project lets your design team know what is most important for you to have in the project versus what would be an added benefit if it can be accommodated within your schedule and budget.

### **Complete the quick exercise below to help determine priorities for your project:**

#### **Desires & Obstacles:**

What is driving you to pursue this project? \_\_\_\_\_

On a scale of 1-100 how important is it to you that this project happen? \_\_\_\_\_

Is there a certain date you want the project completed by? \_\_\_\_\_

What are the consequences if this project doesn't move forward? \_\_\_\_\_

Are there any obstacles in pursuit of this project – on a scale of 1-10 how big is each obstacle? \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Must-haves Versus Wish-list Items:**

What must you have in this project in order for it to meet your goals and have you be happy with it upon its completion? Perhaps the remodel has to enlarge the back to two bedrooms, or must add a bathroom, or the dining room must be enlarged to seat a table of sixteen people at a time. List your must-have items below.

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What are wish-list items i.e., things you'd like to have in your project but don't *have* to have in order to be happy with it at the end of the day? Maybe you're wishing for solid marble counter tops, glass back splashes, and floor to ceiling glazing, but not having these wish-list items won't make or break the project for you. List your wish-list items below.

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## 03 Gather Proposals & Qualify Architect: Timeline 0-4 Weeks

If you've evaluated your priorities and decided you want to move forward with the project, then your next step is to request proposals from Architects for their services.

Some Architects may want to meet you on site to see the space with you, some may want to do preliminary code research prior to supplying you with a price to ensure what you're requesting will meet building and zoning codes; others may provide you with an hourly fee for their services until they are able to meet you in person in order to better understand your goals, needs, and scope for the project.

How long the qualification process takes will depend on how busy the Architect you're requesting a proposal from is, how long it takes you to review proposals, and whether or not the Architect wants to meet you at the site or do other preliminary research before providing with you a proposal.

It's common to go back and forth on an Architect's proposal to add or reduce services in order to best meet your goals or budget once you have their official proposal and list of services included and excluded from their proposal --- for many projects understanding what they excluded can be just as important as understanding what they included.

## 04 Project Kick Off & Mobilization: Timeline 0-1 Week

Once you've selected your Architect, they will typically hold a project kick off meeting with you, ensure all parties are clear on your goals for the project, and provide you with a project schedule.

Most Architects typically won't begin work on your project until they receive a deposit or retainer from you, which is typically 10-33% of the Architect's total fee; so how quickly you send a deposit can affect how quickly they begin work.

We at amy green design further service our clients at project kick off by setting up a Dropbox folder which becomes a one-stop-location for all project related information throughout the life of their project with amy green design --- no more digging through emails as we keep all information for your project neatly organized for you in one convenient location.

At amy green design, we also send clients a survey at project kick off to establish preferred methods of contact and times that are most convenient to communicate about the project with you so we can schedule all communication about the project with you during times that are most convenient to you, and avoid reaching out in times that are less convenient.

## 05 Existing Conditions Documentation: Timeline 0-4 weeks

If you're looking to completely demo everything on-site or are asking your Architect for something as simple as colors and materials for a bathroom remodel, then documenting the existing conditions will likely not be necessary.

However, if you're looking to knock down walls in a space, add new walls, or expand your building, then it's necessary to document the existing conditions.

Many Architects perform this documentation themselves while others hire out a sub-contractor to do it for them. At the end of the day the goal is the same, for the Architect to have accurate CAD drawings of your existing building so they can use them as a basis to accurately begin your remodel from.

How long this process takes depends on how complex and large your building is, how difficult it is to schedule the site visit to take measurements, and the availability of your Architect.

amy green design typically aims to complete existing conditions documentation for clients in 1-2 weeks.

contact amy green design for a quote or consultation at  
[amy@amygreendesign.com](mailto:amy@amygreendesign.com) or 503.438.5411



## 06 Pre-Design & Feasibility Studies: Timeline 0-6 weeks

Pre-Design is beneficial for large projects or those with difficult code or zoning issues.

The point of Pre-Design is for the Architect to review the site, surveys, codes, zoning, and other information for the project in order for them to advise you as to what you'll be able to build on the site and any potential issues they see. Some Architects may prefer to perform this as a separate "feasibility study" or "zoning study."

If you're looking to simply remodel the interior of your co-op unit, then a feasibility study shouldn't be necessary and you could skip this phase, but if you're looking to add three new stories to an existing one-story building or build a new multi-family apartment complex --- then having your Architect perform a feasibility study can greatly benefit your project.

There may be surveys, soil reports, or other tests that need to be performed on your site during this phase as well. Scheduling those needed professionals early on will help keep your project on schedule.

A good Architect will also help provide you with a rough idea of cost, schedule, and team members/consultants that will be needed for the project along with their estimated fees and timelines so you have a clear picture of the total budget and schedule at the end of the feasibility study and you can then decide whether to proceed with the full project, put the project on hold, or revise your goals and the feasibility study for the project.

## 07 Schematic Design: Timeline 2-8 weeks

Schematic Design is when your Architect should begin presenting you with drawings for the project. In this phase the drawings will typically be plan sketches showing the layout of the floor plans they propose for you.

How complex or large your building project is and how many unique floor plates/stories there are for the project will determine how long this process takes. Once the Owner approves the Architect's schematic drawing, the project progresses into the next phase of design services with your Architect.

## 08 Design Development: Timeline 2-12 weeks

Design development is when the Architect will start to select finishes, fixtures, lights, doors, windows, appliances, etc.

How long of a lead time it takes for the vendor to have samples delivered for the Owner & Architect's review or confirm pricing can affect how long this process takes. Some Owners elect to select some or all of the finishes and fixtures themselves; depending on how quickly and effectively they do so; will either add to or reduce the timeline.

The Architect should also present the Owner with more drawings of their proposed design such as elevations, sections, more detailed reflected ceiling and finish plans, etc.

Whether or not the Architect is providing a 3d model to the client during this phase affects the timeline as well as that process can add a couple of weeks to the project.

Any other consultants needed on the project such as mechanical, electrical or plumbing engineers, structural engineers, acoustic consultants, etc. should be signed on at this phase in order to avoid delays in the project.





## 09 Construction Documents: Timeline 3-16 weeks

Construction Documents is typically the largest and longest phase of the architectural process outside of construction.

In the Construction Documents phase the Architect and Engineers finalize all the technical design and engineering including structural engineering and detailing, heating air conditioning and ventilation systems, plumbing, electrical, gas, energy calculations, code references for local jurisdictions, drawings are further developed and detailed for contractors to accurately bid and construct from, and all products and materials are scheduled and identified in the blue prints.

## 10 Landlord & Building Review: Timeline 0-12 weeks

If you're leasing a space your landlord will need to review the project and sign the permit forms before they can submit.

Many co-ops and other buildings often have reviews that can take 4 weeks to 3 months to grant a shareholder approval. Some boards even have a second round of approvals that need to occur before construction can officially start once DOB approval has been obtained, permits pulled, and GC signed one.

You'll want a copy of your building alteration agreement early on in the process in order to avoid delays in schedule.

## 11 DOB Review: Timeline 0-12 weeks

It is possible *not* to have to go through the Department of Buildings (DOB) for a review, however if you're going to remove walls, add a wall, or add new lighting or plumbing --- then you're going to need permits from DOB.

Backlog at DOB is out of the hands of your building design team, however there are a few things that can be done to help ensure the DOB review process is as efficient as possible:

1. Hire an expeditor and/or your Architect to handle the DOB submission and permitting process.
2. Bid the project out to contractors by the time the drawings go to DOB, then bid the drawings while they are under review at DOB so both phases can be done concurrently --- saving you time.
3. There are also strategies such as same day filings and professional certification that your Architect can file under to have your project approved by DOB in a matter of days - however there are limitations on the scope of work for projects filed this way and such projects must not affect building egress, use, egress nor occupancy - for example.

## 12 Landmarks, Zoning & Other Reviews: Timeline 3-16 weeks

Beyond review and permitting with the DOB, there may be other jurisdictions that need to review before permits can be granted and construction can start; such as Landmarks review for Historic properties or Zoning Review for expansions.

Some jurisdictions, such as Landmarks, have expedited in reviews in less than a month your project might qualify for. Have your Architect factor all required reviews into their proposed schedule so you understand the full project timeline.

## 13 Bidding & Negotiations: Timeline 3-8 weeks

Bidding & Negotiations often takes longer than most Owners would expect. There are a couple reasons for this, from contractors being busy and therefore slow to respond, to the time it takes to speak with contractors when one contractor's bid varies wildly from another's bid, to the negotiations the Owner takes on in establishing a contract with their final contractor selected for the project.

Having an Architect manage this process for you will help you get the best contractor at the best price while ensuring an expedient bid process and expert negotiations with your bidders.

# 14 Construction Administration: depends on GC

Construction schedule will be set by the contractor(s) selected for the project. It's important to have asked contractors during the bidding phase how long they estimate construction to be or how they might phase the project so those items are not a surprise after you already signed the contractor on board.

A small remodel could take only three months but a new mid-sized building could take a year to construct.

Having an Architect on your project during construction to provide construction administration services helps keep the process moving forward and your Architect can act as a liaison for issues that occur on-site during construction.

There are typically code required inspections, signoffs and other services required of your architect during Construction Admin, so you'll want to ensure from the beginning of identifying your Architect's services that you understand what they will be providing for you during construction admin.

Your Architect's construction admin services typically extend a few weeks past completion of construction due to sign-offs, helping you obtain deposits back from your board at completion of construction, and other services.

clients are often surprised how much work there is for your Architect during construction admin including inspections, signoffs, field reports, responding to contractor requests for clarification, assisting with drawings changes due to changes made in the field by the contractor, coordinating reselection of items that have been discontinued, board coordination, coordinating orders and deliveries, reviewing shop drawings and submittals --- and more!

See our *Working With Your Architect* guide for more information on what to expect from your Architect during each phase of the design and construction process.

## Client testimonial of how amy green design is saving clients time, money and headache:

*"I worked with Amy during our home renovation to get landmark preservation approval for some windows and an HVAC unit. If any of you are doing renovations in Manhattan, you know the pain when it comes to permits, permissions, and general timeline. (And add the LPC on top of that).*

*When I reached out to her, I was desperate to find someone since many of the architects were quoting exorbitant fees for what I thought to be a relatively small scope project.*

*Amy was prompt in her replies, thorough in her work, and very reasonable in her fees. Her goal is not to maximize her revenue, unlike many of the architects we know of in Manhattan, and her goal is to get the job done as efficiently as possible.*

*Amy works late, works hard, and is extremely professional. I've recommended her to friends getting renovations done and will likely involve her again on future projects in our home.*

*In fact, I regret not having an architect/designer involved from my project from the beginning... having someone like her as your advocate will save you time and headache (of which I've had many, and of which Amy has saved me several)." - Sam K.*



# 15 Most Common Delays & How to Avoid Them

- **Clients Wanting More Time to Review Schematic Design & Design Development Drawings:** locking in the schematic design particularly is very important in order to avoid delays down the road so it's always worth another week to review the design, but make sure not to drag out your review endlessly or schedule will fall behind
- **Clients Electing To Make Their Own Design Selections:** some clients elect to select their own design selections such as finishes, lighting, and fixtures but have difficulty finding what they are looking for or get too busy to continue making the selections on their own. In these cases, an addendum can be created to add for the Architect to finish making the design selections in order to help move the project forward.
- **Client Requested Changes:** once the schematic design for the project is locked in, making changes to the scope or design of the project after that time can start to draw the project schedule out as it could cause numerous drawings and consultant work across the project to have to be revised. Be clear on your must have and wish list items from the get-go in order to avoid making changes to those down the road that could set your project back.
- **Obtaining Signatures on Permit Application Forms:** most jurisdictions require original signatures on permit application forms which means you may need to sign it, then your architect, then the engineer, and possibly other parties such as Landmarks or a co-op Board; so acquiring all those signatures can extend the schedule 2-4 weeks depending on how fast each party signs then sends the forms onto the next party who also needs to sign.
- **Board & Building Reviews:** it's often impossible to know just how difficult a Board will be to obtain approval from such as approval from a Co-op Board or from a Landlord for a leased space - but their signatures are typically legally required on permit applications before they are submit to DOB, so it's best to get in communication with your Board early on in order to develop clear communication and expectations with them early on in the process. Renovation might have gone through easily on a previous unit only for it to get extended in the next renovation due to a change in Board members or review process.
- **Special Local Jurisdiction Reviews such as Landmarks, Zoning, etc:** these reviews can extend projects by a couple weeks to a couple months depending on requested public hearings and other considerations. Some jurisdictions offer fast track reviews such as NYC Landmarks for simple projects that you can take advantage of.
- **DOB Review & Approval:** backlog at the local Department of Buildings can delay a project beyond what was originally anticipated. There are special same day reviews, permits filed on-line and permits that are faster to obtain than others. Discuss with your Architect early on to determine what the best filing process will be for your project.
- **Pulling Permits:** typically a contractor also has to submit documentation to the local DOB, confirm their insurance and registration is current, and pull the permit(s) for the project after DOB has given approval. This process can add a couple weeks to a project. To avoid this, be sure to have your desired GC on-board by the time you expect to need to pull the permits and ensure all their licenses, insurances, and registrations are current.
- **Second Board & Building Reviews:** some boards require additional documents, inspections, approvals, and dear neighbor letters be submit before construction can officially start. It's best to start working on these requirements early in order to avoid delays.
- **Contractor Availability:** contractors may have to finish out other jobs before starting yours. Construction timeline and start dates should be discussed during bidding - not just pricing - to ensure contractor timeline will meet the schedule.
- **Contractor Work Over Holidays or Inclement Weather:** if work is going to occur in Winter the holidays and weather conditions may delay your project. Some clients elect to push construction start dates off until after the holidays to avoid most of these delays.
- **Lead Time of Materials:** clients sometimes forget that the lead time for a design product they have been eyeing for their renovation such as an incredible stone from Italy might take three months to ship. With long lead items you run the risk of them not being ready on-site by the time they are needed for install, which can delay your project. Ensure you're selecting items with an appropriate lead time and consider that you can order long lead materials prior to construction so they can be ready on-site for install by the time they are needed for construction.
- **Ordering & Delivering Materials to the Site at the Appropriate Time:** even if you picked items with appropriate lead times, if you forget to order the items or send deposits by the time they are needed on-site it, your contractor might not be able to proceed with construction until materials arrive on site. To avoid this, develop a schedule with your contractor and/or Architect to ensure all materials are being ordered at the appropriate time.
- **Discontinued of Out of Stock Materials:** especially if you ended up delaying your project, by the time you're buying materials for a project the light or other fixture you picked out may have been discontinued so additional time may be needed to find a suitable alternate for the project. As long as this is done quickly and within a lead time that won't set the project back, then luckily it can have little impact on project time line.
- **Required inspections:** there are inspections required by DOB during your renovation as well as possibly your Architect, Engineer, Building Management, and other special inspections during construction. The availability of those parties for the inspections and scheduling the inspections at the appropriate times will help avoid delays for inspections.



# 16 How Can I Reduce the Timeline of My Project

1. Be clear on the priorities for your project from the beginning.
2. It is possible to perform a project without it triggering the need for review by DOB or permits which can reduce your timeline, however doing so will limit the scope of what you are able to do. For example --- if remodeling a bathroom and you simply put a new sink in where the existing one is, new toilet where the existing one is, new light in the existing location; basically only replacing existing items with new in the same location --- then permits will not be needed in most jurisdictions. However, if you're hoping to move a bathroom wall, then that would trigger the need for permits of most building departments.
3. If your project will require a survey, testing, geotechnical report or other technical testing by a licensed professional --- be ready to contract those services early in the process in order to avoid delays as your building design professionals need those tests and reports in order to be able to complete their work.
4. Start working with your board or building management company early on in the process.
5. Contact consultants for proposals in a timely manner so you have their proposal agreed upon and they are ready to work by the time your Architect needs to begin involving them on the project during the Design Development phase.
6. Approve the Architect's samples and drawings in a timely manner. If you want the delivery of goods and samples to be quick, then communicate that to your Architect so they select materials for you with a short lead time.
7. Start ordering materials - particularly materials with long lead times - before construction starts so that by the time they are needed for construction they are on-site for installation.
8. Ensure you have a your contractor signed on board by the time you need to pull permits to begin construction and that all their insurances, licenses, and registrations are current.
9. Ensure your Architect is providing consultant coordination during the Construction Documents phase to help keep all consultants organized and moving forward productively as a team.
10. Hire an expeditor to manage the permit & expediting process with DOB.
11. Have an Architect managing the Construction Administration process for you to ensure the project is progressing as the Architect would expect given their years of experience in the field. Your Architect can also act as a liaison between the Owner and Contractor when there are issues - in order to help quickly address the issues and avoid delays on the project by the Contractor.
12. Ensure your contractor has a solid schedule for when they will be scheduling required inspections during construction.
13. There are also ways to fast-track a project such as applying for a demolition permit separately from the construction permit so the demo can get started while your building design team is still working on construction drawings and filing strategies such as same day reviews for permitting in some jurisdictions. Ask your Architect about strategies such as this, but be prepared to pay more in design, permit, and expediting fees to do so.
14. Amy Green Design can help provide you additional support in making your design selections for you, coordinating bidding & negotiations with contractors for you, handling board approval for you and more --- to expedite the process.
15. In extreme cases that would put an unusual burden on clients due to temporary housing or other costs and considerations, Amy Green Design can even complete design development and parts of construction documents at the same time as schematic design in order to help your project progress as quickly as possible. Contact us to discuss!
16. Amy Green Design implements strategies on all client projects to help keep your timeline as minimal as possible such as performing board review at the same time as bidding, signing contractors on board while you're going through DOB review and can help you get your project done faster than most architects! Check out our client testimonials:

***"Most Architects I worked with in the past take a long time to finish the job. Amy was on top of it from the beginning. Needed good quality and time was of the essence. Amy completed the work in timely manner." – Ed A.***

***"Amy did the work required at a great value and almost instantly." – Ilana L.***



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## Summary

Pulling together a great building design team for your project is what will keep your project efficient, effective, and on schedule. Your Architect is your first step in helping you understand what consultants, tests, inspections, and permits will be necessary for your project as well as assisting you with ways to meet your budget and schedule such as reducing scope to avoid permits or fast-tracking your project. amy green design is here to help you design a better tomorrow!

Contact amy green design today to discuss how we can assist you as the Architect & Interior Designer on your next building project to ensure it's success for all parties with our 20 years experience at your side.

amy green design  
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