

The Challenge of Community Input in Architectural Design Processes

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In the context of developing a new complex building for a community, a typical decision-making process involves multiple parties including architects, engineers, and financial experts. Ideally, the community **agrees on first principles** and creates a client brief, which the architect then uses to develop the best solution. However, a common issue arises when community members attempt to modify the architect's plans directly, rather than communicating their needs and allowing the architect to find the optimal solution. This approach can lead to suboptimal designs and frustration among all parties involved, highlighting the need for a more effective method of incorporating community input while respecting the architect's expertise.

Here's a concise outline of the **decision-making process** for creating a new complex building for a community, highlighting an issue that can occur.

1. Community Agreement:

- Establish first principles
- Create a client brief

2. Architect's Role:

- Receive client brief
- Develop initial plans based on brief
- Present plans to community

3. Engineering Input:

- Structural feasibility
- Systems integration

4. Financial Considerations:

- Budget analysis
- Cost estimations

5. Community Feedback:

- Review architect's plans
- Provide input on desired changes

6. Iteration and Refinement:

- Architect incorporates feedback
- Updates plans as needed

7. Final Approval and Implementation

The issue occurs at step 5. Instead of providing input on what they want (which should ideally happen at step 1), **community members are attempting to change the architect's plans directly. This can lead to less optimal solutions and frustration for all parties involved.**

To address this, you might consider:

1. Emphasizing the importance of a **comprehensive initial brief**
2. **Educating the community on the architect's role and expertise**
3. Establishing a clear feedback process **that focuses on needs rather than specific design change**

Illustration

During the space of a B&S meeting about adding a door between two established design, the small sewing room and the large multipurpose room has been swap, and the multipurpose room has disappeared to change into a small library that did not exist before.

The original brief was:

- a sewing room of 20 s.m. and
- multipurpose room of 50 s.m. (the common room in comparison is 46 s.m.)

At the end of the discussion *without looking at the brief, without looking at any plan and complex knock on effect, and without consulting an architect, it was approved to*

- switch to a sewing room of 50 s.m. (increase of 250% the size of the original client brief),
- to remove the 50 s.m. multipurpose room and
- to add a new 20 s.m single purpose library.

I feel this decision might not have been made in an optimal way and is in contradiction with the initial brief that was crafted by the community and used by the architect and us to come up with the Vihara design.