Wether renovating your kitchen to create more open space, adding a room or floor to plan for expanding family needs, or designing your future dream home, working with an architect can help to increase the value of the house and the outcome of the process. Licensed architects are trained specialists that help identify and design living solutions to meet aesthetic and functional requirements. Architects coordinate teams of design, engineering and construction professionals, as well as ensure the project is built in compliance with building codes and zoning requirements. Every architect has his or her own creative approach, and it is important to find one that matches your style.

RESEARCH — There are numerous resources to assist you in your search for the architect that best suits your needs.

• Small Firms, Great Projects — This publication is a useful directory of San Francisco Bay Area architecture, landscape and design firms with an inventory of sample projects that we hope will serve as inspiration for your future project. An expanded online companion is available at www.aiasf.org/sfgp.

• AIA San Francisco online directory — Representing a wealth of expertise on topics ranging from sustainable design to historic preservation, an online firm directory showcases the diverse work and talent of more than 2,200 architects, designers and affiliated professionals in the Bay Area. All are invited to access this directory at http://aiasf.org/directory.

• Home Tours — Every May and September, AIA San Francisco hosts a Home Tours program, which offers potential clients an inside view of distinctive homes in the San Francisco Bay Area. Architects are present at the homes and available to answer questions. Our 2014 San Francisco Living: Home Tours weekend is scheduled for September 20-21. For more information, visit www.aiasf.org/hometours.

ASK QUESTIONS — As with every job search, questions are critical to help you determine who will be the right fit. When meeting prospective architects, here are a few guiding factors to consider:

• Experience — Ask for a portfolio of similar projects and a list of client references.

• Timeline — Establish an estimated timeline that takes into consideration the architect’s availability, wait time for approval process, and milestone dates for project completion.

• Vision — Define the scope and sequence of the project.

• Design — Prioritize your needs and steps in the design process including how engaged you would like to be in the design process.

• Budget — Determine a clear and comprehensive fee structure.

For additional information, Consumer’s Guide to Hiring an Architect, published by the California Architects Board, provides a more detailed list of questions to ask an architect before you sign a contract. Download the guide at www.cab.ca.gov, or call 916.574.7220.

CONTRACTS — When you are ready to proceed with your project and have confirmed your architect of choice, find the appropriate contract to solidify the agreement. You can purchase documents online at www.aiasf.org, or visit the AIA San Francisco office at 130 Sutter Street, Suite 600.