



ESSENTIALS FOR A **SUCCESSFUL** PHOTOSHOOT

Architectural Photoshoot Checklist

Maximizing Your Photography Budget

Understanding Architectural Photography Fees

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Checklist For A Successful Architectural Photoshoot



- **Permissions.** Permission and property release obtained for photography from property owner, corporation, municipality, etc. as appropriate.
- **Exact street address of property,** directions to property if appropriate.
- **Compass orientation of property** (Which direction does it face?).
- **Gate access, key code, keys and alarm code** (if property representative is not present).
- **On-site contact person's** name and cell phone number; owner's cell phone number.
- **All interior lights functional.** Representative on hand with knowledge to **OVERRIDE** timers, motion sensors and photocells to insure that **ALL** interior lights are **ON**. **ESSENTIAL FOR DUSK/DAWN SHOTS!**
- **All interior spaces cleaned,** dusted, de-cluttered and staged prior to photoshoot.
- **All rooms accessible,** interior doors unlocked.
- **All shades & blinds operational** and in the UP position. Windows cleaned.
- **Garbage cans** moved out of sight.

- **Floors** swept, mopped or vacuumed thoroughly.
- **Photoshoot scheduled** for immediately after housekeeping, **NOT** the day of cleaning.
- **Lighting & AV Systems:** instructions or representative present for elaborate lighting systems and AV systems.
- **No cleaning or maintenance personnel** working in areas to be photographed (interior).
- **All exterior lights functional** and timers, motion sensors and photocells for landscape/exterior lighting located. Representative on hand with knowledge to **OVERRIDE** timers, motion sensors and photo cells to insure that **ALL** exterior lights are **ON**. ESSENTIAL FOR DUSK/DAWN SHOTS!
- **Landscape maintenance** (mowing, edging, weeding, planting, etc.) performed **prior** to scheduled photoshoot.
- **Flowers and plants** all appear in good health. Additional plantings added **prior** to photoshoot.
- **Garden hoses**, tools, watering cans, sprinklers, rakes, shovels, etc. put away and out of sight.
- **Pool/spa service**, performed **prior** to scheduled shoot. Pool hoses and pool tools put away.
- **Sprinkler systems turned OFF** during photoshoot to keep the building, walkways, patio areas, photography equipment and photographer dry.
- **Vehicles moved** - no cars on curb, in parking lot, driveway, or motor court (Please notify all drivers prior to photoshoot). Driveway, walkways powerwashed if appropriate.
- **No maintenance or delivery trucks** scheduled on the day of photoshoot.
- **Garbage cans** moved out of sight.
- **No barricades**, cones, barrels, barrier tape or other safety & construction items present.
- **No cleaning or maintenance personnel** working in areas to be photographed (exterior & interior).
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Make The Most Of Your Architectural Photography Budget



Legendary architectural photographer Julius Shulman once said, "[Architects live and die by the images taken of their work; as these images alone are what people see. For every one person who visits a project, there may be ten thousand who only view it as a photo.](#)"

Here's a test of that theory: Think of your favorite architectural subject of all time (building, residence, bridge, etc.) Now, answer this: Are you thinking of an "in-person" encounter with that project, or are you instead thinking of a well-known photograph? In nearly every situation, it's a photograph that represents our impression of an architectural subject.

Your task is to find photographers who can create memory-making images of your projects at a price your firm can afford. From that starting point let me suggest five ways to make your budget stretch as far as possible.

1. Choose Photographers with a Reputation for Doing Great Work.

"Oh yes," you say, "but won't they be the most expensive?" Maybe, and maybe not. Consider the real cost of using a low-price photographer who produces sub-par photographs for your firm. Have you ever had to explain to a potential client that,

"This building really looks a lot better than it does in this photograph," or "You can't really see it in this photograph, but..." Why do that? Rather, hire a photographer who produces photographs that surprise even you at how well they portray your project. Think of how great it would be to download files from your photographer and have the whole office buzzing about how amazing the photographs look.

Also, when you find your firm getting significant social media attention simply due to great photography, you'll soon see it as a worthwhile marketing investment. Bottom line: If photographers don't produce great photographs, don't hire them. Bad work is never a bargain.

2. Consider Photographers Who offer Shared Cost & Licensing Discounts.

Simply put, this means that many photographers offer discounted fees when multiple parties choose to license the photographs from a particular project for their firm's marketing efforts. For instance, maybe you're an architectural firm and you mention to the contractor, engineering firm, interior designer, landscape designer, building owner, architectural product manufacturer, etc. that you intend to have a new project photographed.

The question you ask is, "Would you be interested in sharing the cost and license for photography of this project?" In many situations, the photographer will take it upon themselves to contact the various parties involved in a project to offer cost and license sharing discounts. The bottom line is that with most photographers it's possible for each party to save up to 60% over having the project shot and paid for individually.

In other words, rather than paying \$2000 for photographs of one of your projects, you could be paying \$825 if you share cost and license with the other firms involved. Same photographs, just a much smaller investment on your part.

3. Always Have a Shot List in Mind When Requesting a Photography Quotation.

Preparing a photography quotation is much the same as preparing an architectural proposal: It's essential to know the client's expectations, needs, vision and budget considerations. Consider making a list of the essential shots for the project, a "wish list" of possible shots, and an explanation of your own vision of how you'd like to see the project interpreted visually.

I recommend a walk-through of the project with the photographer if at all possible. This gives you the opportunity to explain to the photographer the most important points of the design and construction you'd like to have captured, as well as giving the photographer the chance to consider how they might best interpret the space.

A floor plan with suggested camera positions and notations could also take the place of a walk-through. Basically you're asking the photographer to see the project through your eyes, and they in turn are asking you to trust their artistic vision as they interpret your expectations. Notice that I use the word "trust" in this explanation.

Often the best architectural photographs are made when the client leaves the photographer to their own creative devices. In other words, sometimes it's best to simply walk away and let the photographer do what they do best.

4. Choose a Photographer Who Specializes in Architectural Photography.

Yes, it does make a difference whether or not a photographer specializes in architectural photography. In fact, a huge difference. Architectural photography is arguably one of the most technically difficult of all photographic specialties. A good photographer has a grasp of the various types, colors and qualities of light in a given scene, and how best to deal with each of them. They also understand the way their camera will reproduce the scene versus how your eye perceives the scene.

An experienced architectural photographer may employ any number of techniques to balance light and shadow, subdue reflections, maintain color fidelity and enhance shadow detail. Architectural photographers also employ special camera lenses designed to allow them to correct architectural perspective distortions.

Straight and parallel vertical lines along with believable perspectives are the hallmarks of a skilled architectural photographer. That being said, the equipment a photographer uses is probably the least important consideration when choosing a competent and talented architectural photographer.

In fact, if a photographer boasts to you about their equipment either in person or on their website, consider it a red flag. **Talent always matters more than tools.**

5. Make Site Preparation a High Priority.

Proper preparation of your project for photography may be one of the biggest factors in enabling your photographer to create great photographs. Site preparation involves security clearances, owner consent, on-site contact information, cleaning coordination, maintenance coordination, interior design elements, parking coordination, landscape and watering coordination, weather contingencies, etc.

One of the most difficult aspects of site preparation for a photographer is operating the ever more complex lighting systems installed in new buildings. A dusk shot of a commercial building with motion-sensing lighting may require a having small army of individuals on hand to continuously activate the lighting.

Photocells and timers for outdoor lighting are also a challenge. Having a knowledgeable building manager on hand who knows and is familiar with the various building systems is a godsend.

Finally, always expect great photography--always!



Understanding Architectural Photography Fees



For most photography buyers, there seems to be little commonality among photographers in the way that they charge for their work. The truth is however that most photographers at the top level of the architectural photography industry price their work in much the same way. **The most common approach is the Creative Fee method.**

This is the method that I've used for years, and the most common approach among my fellow architectural photographers. For me it's the simplest and easiest approach for calculating architectural photography fees. Please allow me to explain:

1. The Basic Creative Fee.

The idea behind the Creative Fee approach is to present you, the client, with a single figure that includes all of the costs related to your particular project. No endless line items, no nonsensical "per-shot" costs, just a single fee. **The Creative Fee typically includes the following:**

Photography + Location Scouting + Assistants + Stylists + Props + Travel Costs + Rentals + Incidental Costs + File Fees + Preview Images + Basic Retouch + Image Delivery + Image Licensing (Single Party) = CREATIVE FEE.

2. Contingencies and Add-Ons.

There are a few items that are not customarily included in the basic Creative Fee. The most common among them is custom retouch. It's virtually impossible to predict the custom retouch needs of a

project beforehand, so this item is quoted and added after the client has previewed the images. Additional add-ons may include changes in the image licensing.

3. Image Licensing Terms.

Generally speaking, the Creative Fee quoted by an architectural photographer reflects the following licensing terms: "A single-party, non-transferable image license for all media with no expiration is granted upon payment in full. This license may not be assigned or transferred to a third party, including, but not limited to: clients, contractors, sub-contractors, consultants, manufacturers, distributors, retailers, re-sellers, property owners/managers, sales agents, social media connections, etc. photographer retains copyright."

Simply put, these terms allow for use of the photography by the company commissioning the photography and no one else. The commissioning party may not "share" the photographs with any other individual or company without violating the terms of the original licensing contract. If a third party wishes to use the photographs in any way, a license for use must be purchased from the photographer.

The reason for these licensing restrictions is very simple: The original Creative Fee is based on the number of licenses granted under the licensing contract. The greater the number of licensees, the higher the Creative Fee. If the images are being created for the benefit of multiple parties rather than a single business entity, the Creative Fee will reflect that broader image value.

However, the fee charged for multiple licensees is rarely if ever a simple multiple of the base Creative Fee. Most, if not all photographers offer a substantial discount for multi-party licensing.

4. Multi-Party Image Licensing.

As mentioned above, photographers generally offer substantial discounts when multiple parties wish to license the images from a single project. Ordinarily the multi-party licensing discounts come with certain restrictions. The most common restriction is that all parties must make a firm commitment to the purchase of the photographs either prior to the photoshoot, or upon viewing the image previews.

Personally I offer multi-party licensing discounts for only one two week following a photoshoot. After that time, my customary (and significantly higher) image licensing fees apply.

Below is an example of my own personal formula for calculating multi-party licensing discounts. Most photographers use a formula very close to mine. In this example, I'll use a basic Creative Fee of \$2000.

Single Party Image License = \$2000

Two Party Image License = $\$2000 \times 1.5 \div 2 = \1500 Per Party (25% Discount Per Party)

Three Party Image License = $\$2000 \times 1.95 \div 3 = \1300 Per Party (35% Discount Per Party)

Four Party Image License = $\$2000 \times 2.2 \div 4 = \1100 Per Party (45% Discount Per Party)

Five+ Party Image License = $\$2000 \times 2.5 \div 5 = \1000 Per Party (50% Discount Per Party)

5. Copyright Ownership.

As a general rule, the photographer retains copyright ownership of all of the photographs they create. Under current United States Copyright Law, photographs are considered to be copyrighted when they are created and are the property of the photographer. This is true even if the photographs are not registered with the U.S. Copyright Office. Photographs with copyright registration are granted a higher damage recovery when they are infringed when compared with unregistered photographs.

If a company commissioning photography wishes to own the copyright for the subsequent photographs, there must be a contract stipulating that the photographer is transferring all rights, including copyright. While uncommon, some companies require all rights to photography that they commission. In these cases the photographer's fee is significantly higher--typically at least 300% of the normal fee.

Additionally, if the photographer is an employee of a company and not an independent contractor or freelancer, the company is regarded as the copyright owner and the photographs are considered to have been created on a "work for hire" basis.

6. More On Licensing.

Copyright infringement has historically been a serious and often unsolvable problem for professional photographers. However, with the advent of digital media it's possible to find and identify un-licensed and un-authorized image usage quite easily. Once identified, the infringing party faces significant legal and financial consequences for copyright infringement.

My advice: avoid sharing any photograph that you have been licensed to use. And when in doubt, contact the photographer. A simple Instagram or Facebook post of a "shared" photograph could have significant financial consequences. There are now a number of firms whose sole business is to scour the web in behalf of their photographer clients and identify infringements. The resulting legal recoveries are generally substantial. Just don't do it!

7. Final Thoughts

As with most professional services, when it comes to architectural photography you generally "get what you pay for." A less expensive and less experienced photographer may appear to be a bargain, but in the end may cost you significantly in terms of brand image, customer service and market position.

My advice: hire a photographer who will showcase your work with excellent photographs and provide superior service throughout the entire process.

