

# Architectural Designer, Sustainable Design

## Job Description

Architectural designers help build and maintain **client relationships**, as well as interact and consult with **design and construction professionals**. They need to be flexible to be able to work independently or in a team to develop building projects.

## Salary

Entry — \$69,000  
Middle — \$82,000  
Top — \$97,000

## Core Tasks

- Researches, programs, plans, designs, and administers building projects for clients, applying knowledge of architectural design, construction procedures, zoning and building codes, and building materials and systems.
- Plans and programs layout of project(s); coordinates and integrates engineering elements into unified design for client review and approval.
- Assists in research and coordination of materials and products for project specifications.

## Workplace / Environment

- **Work hours**  
**Approx. 40 hours/week**  
(During key project milestones overtime work may be required to meet deadlines)
- **Environment**  
Typical **office setting**, **occasional site visits** to oversee projects
- **Travel**  
Depends on **project location** to visit project sites

## Education / Prerequisites

### Education Level

Typically Bachelor's or Master's degree in Architecture or related fields.

### Licensing

NCARB Certificate, Registered Architect (RA)

### Pre-Job Preparation

Typically a few years of internship experience. Licensure required after college.

## Experience

### Soft Skills

- Excellent Communication
- Creativity
- Organization Skills

### Technical Skills

- Proficiency in AutoCAD, Revit, and Microsoft Office
- Technical Sketching and Drawing
- Technical Writing



## Career Path: Alyssa M. Mitchell

### About Me

Associate Architect at Weber Thompson

Master's of Architecture, Engineering, and Construction Management from Carnegie Mellon University

### Early Experiences

"I've had an interest in architecture since I was about 10, and I think I always **envisioned architecture in my future**. I really enjoyed making paper models as a hobby when I was a kid and in high school I really **enjoyed math and science**. In my later high school years, I had a friend whose relative became a mentor to me. She let me shadow her and see her work, this helped me understand what she does throughout the day. Her project was local, which allowed me to understand how you can influence your community. Leading into senior year, I attended the Virginia Tech Inside Design Summer Program. It was really great, because I was around other students that were interested in architecture, and we were all working on these projects together. And it really helps **stretch your creativity** when you're around other people that also care deeply about design."

### College Choices

"I attended Carnegie Mellon University where I received a Bachelor of Architecture degree. I had my first internship **teaching students** about architecture, later I interned at two **construction firms**, one in Orlando, Florida and the other in Pittsburgh. I continued on to grad school at Carnegie Mellon University and received my Master's in architecture, engineering and construction management. During that degree, I was a **GEM fellow**, you get partnered with a company that sponsors your Master's degree. I was partnered with Facebook at the time and I a Data Center Design Intern in the Design, Engineering, Construction Organization. When I graduated from my Master's, I landed my **first job here** at Weber Thompson." "

### Pursuing Passions

"I have **always been really artsy** in a lot of different ways. I continue to express my art in a lot of other ways. I continue to paint, do watercolor, acrylic, crochet, knit, a lot of different things. Architecture has been really great to just be able to use that artistic desire in a different way, and apply it to the built environment. My passion for affordable housing really stems from my own need for housing as a kid, it was **really important** for me to be able to apply that to my career. That's why I practice in affordable housing now, and especially in Seattle, where there's a large homelessness crisis. I think it's really impactful to be able to use architecture to shelter our most vulnerable populations. Being able to provide good design, in addition to just the basic need of shelter can be **really powerful**."

## The Present



"There are a lot of steps along my journey that have gotten me to where I am today. The people that I've met along the way have been **super pivotal**, at that first shadowing opportunity, she really took me under her wing and helped me get into the architecture program in my undergrad. There have been **a lot of touch points** along the way. And I think they've all aligned with the people that I've met on this journey."

## About My Job

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"The people that I've met along the way have been **super pivotal**."

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### Pros

- "I **really enjoy** the design process. I enjoy the early stages where you're just getting into the site, and how things are working together with sustainability within the community."
- "When I was in college, I actually did a couple of internships in construction. Being able to actually see the building go up is **really exciting** and a little more **fast paced than design work**. So I really enjoy being outside."
- "I think the pros are **definitely the people** that you get to work with, architects get really excited about design and the things that we get to do with design."

### Cons

- "It can be an **up and down industry**, depending on the economy. Sometimes we have a lot of projects going on, and that's really exciting. And other times you just have to go with what's in the market right now."

### Fieldwork

- "On occasion, the **project team does visit** the site, depending on what stage it's at in the design process. During construction administration, the architect might be on site once a week. But that's usually in the later stages, **post design**."

### Office Work

- "My day to day consists of some **project design meetings**, a **lot of software work**; I work a lot in Revit, some SketchUp, AutoCAD, Photoshop, a bunch of different computer programs. There's a lot of **collaboration within my team** on our projects."

## Skills

- "When I started the undergraduate program, I realized that I was **at a little bit of a deficit**. I did not know any computer software, I had sketched freehand on my own, but I didn't have any formal training. If you for sure want to major in architecture, it would be really beneficial for you to just take an art class, take a class in Photoshop or InDesign illustrator, even a CAD class will just give you some basic foundation, before you jump into the deep end that can be the first year of architecture school."

## Education/Experience

- "If you are interested in architecture, there are **a lot of programs** that can show you what the industry is like now. [NOMA Project Pipeline](#) is an initiative to share architecture with minority middle school students specifically, but all students can apply."
- "An undergraduate program in architecture will teach you what you need to know from the beginning. If you can get into some design camps, take some classes, or even just explore architecture on your own, it will help you have **a better foundation for starting**."

## A Note on College Choices

"If you know that you're interested in architecture in high school, I would recommend that you do a **five year Bachelor of Architecture** program, that program is **accredited**. Once you finish the five years, then you can start on your licensing journey, take your exams, finish your hours, and become a licensed architect faster. There is another route to licensure, which is doing a four year unaccredited program, but you will have to do an **additional master's program**. If that's the path that you would like to take, just be aware that that does take an extra year."

## The Future of Sustainable Design

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"Sustainability has been a big industry push."

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"Sustainability has **really been big in the architecture field** over the past couple of years. I think that is going to continue at an exponential rate, given the climate crisis that we're in right now. I think that architects, contractors, and engineers have a really big opportunity to do **more for sustainability**. Buildings and construction produce **high rates of carbon**, I think that we could definitely do better there. I think that housing will also need to multiply, affordable housing especially, given the economic state that we're in, I see growth there. I also think that there's technological growth that architects should start to take advantage of and not be afraid of. I think that the powers of AI can be really helpful with our fields. It's **important to use those tools** in our toolkit and not be afraid of them."

# About Sustainability Ambassadors

We are here to **RAPIDLY ADVANCE A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE**. Empowering **YOUTH** to catalyze community sustainability, **TEACHERS** to integrate rigor with relevance for real-world impact, **COMMUNITY** to drive collective impact.

We support a year-round training program for over 60 highly motivated middle and high school youth, a Teacher Fellows Program, City-County CAP internships, and college-level interns, and work with hundreds of educators to design new models of problem-based, place-based learning around **a shared vision of educating for sustainability**.

## Your Green Jobs Future

**Ready** to explore your future in green jobs? Use [Map your Career](#) to map your trajectory!

**Find** career opportunities near you now! Use [Career Connect - Washington's](#) tool to find programs to build your career skills.

**Interested** in a future in solar? Take a look at the [Solar Jobs Census](#) to track solar job growth nationwide.

**Explore** [RVC's opportunities](#) to work with organizations led by communities of color.

**Dive** into the [Center of Excellence for Clean Energy's](#) robust career tools in the sustainable energy sector.

**Grow** your professional sustainability skillset with the [Seattle Youth Good Program](#).

**See** Seattle's [Clean Energy Resources Map](#) to examine what the city is planning for a greener energy future.

**Check out** the [U.S. Green Building Council](#) to explore the sector's current opportunities. :

## Funder Acknowledgement



**King County**

Department of Natural Resources and Parks  
**Wastewater Treatment Division**

