



A Checklist For Your Architectural Photography Project

An architectural photography assignment is a commitment of time, of resources and of money. Creating high-quality images on location presents a complex series of challenges. Thorough planning and communication among the client, photographer, location owner and representatives at the site can help ensure maximum efficiency and productivity.

The material in this checklist has been gathered from design firms and architectural photographers around the country. While each assignment is unique, the information will be helpful in anticipating issues that may come up during the planning and actual production of a location photography project. It is a useful reference guide for the designer, the client, for others involved in the assignment and for the photographer as well.

Description of Assignment and Preparation of Job Proposal

The Client to Specify

- Exact location of the site, description and documentation required
- Walk through the project site with photographer if feasible
- Provide maps and/or plans with accurate North arrow
- Clearly describe goals: areas to photograph, number of views
- Detail design materials, light sources, spaces in use, etc
- Communicate problems or flaws that photographer to downplay/avoid
- Who is commissioning photography and for what purpose?
- Images for single client only?
- Multiple parties sharing photo costs and each using the images?
- Delivery deadline of the images

The Photographer to Specify

Copyright

- Explain clearly that copyright is retained by photographer unless specifically transferred in writing
- Permitted/Restricted use of images
- Scope of usage
- Length of time for use of images
- Subsidiary rights
- Indicate the form to be supplied



Negotiation and Fees

The photographer's fee is predicated on the use of the images and the costs of production. Broader usage increases the value of the images and fees are adjusted proportionately.

Client and photographer must understand if there is leeway in the budget for unexpected conditions, extra views, variables in time, materials and job costs.

If the budget is fixed, are the limitations clearly understood by all parties? If the client needs to negotiate a lower fee, what can be given up in return? This might involve restricted usage, few images, less elaborate lighting or styling, less formal photographs, more flexible schedule with longer lead time, more prominent credit line for the photographer, among other options.

Once all terms are understood and agreed upon, the client should be willing to sign a proposal or contract and to provide a purchase order along with advance payment to confirm the assignment.

At the Site: Issues to Consider

Are the owners or those at the site expecting the photographer and crew?

Do they understand the level of production and length of time involved? (Some people assume a photographer will show up with a hand-held camera, take snapshots and be finished in a few minutes. Don't surprise them).

Will client or representative be present during the shoot?

The photographer must know how to contact:

Client with office, home and weekend numbers for day and evening

Building owner

Security force

Maintenance personnel

Electrical service for permission to control site lighting and computer controls

Others involved in the project

Has full access been arranged to the site?

Is there parking available for the photographer?

Can photographer, crew, equipment get in after hours? And get out afterwards?

Does photographer need keys or security codes for access to any areas?

Are the elevators working? Alarm systems turned off?

Are all the rooms and areas accessible?

Can windows and blinds be adjusted?



Consider the time of year and the weather to be expected

Natural light and the angle of the sun

Which way does the building face?

Sun on the main facade?

Consider the season

Leaves on the trees?

Flowering shrubs and plants?

Snow on the ground?

Seasonal decorations?

Consider the day of the week

Moving automobile traffic and/or parked cars?

Pedestrians, office workers, services or deliveries?

Consider the best time of day for the photography both interiors and exteriors

Natural light. Sun. Shadows. Mixed lighting. Views.

Is it best to shoot at night?

Has all the construction been completed?

Has the client representative inspected the site recently?

Trailers, dumpsters, scaffolding, fences and debris removed?

Construction and leasing signs removed?

Permanent signage in place? Illuminated?

All spaces, including ground floor stores, occupied?

Landscaping complete?

Site conditions should be reviewed before the photographer arrives

Windows clean? None broken?

Grounds well maintained?

Lawns green? Gardens watered?

Mature plants? Or just wisps?

Watering apparatus turned off to keep the building dry?

Request delay in facility maintenance during the shoot (mowing, road work, window cleaning not today, thank you).

Fountains working?

Flags and banners in place?

Find out about other possible disruptions such as trash pickup, deliveries, street festivals, parades.

Graffiti on building? Fences? Posters? Signs?



Electrical considerations:

Be sure to have information on the color temperature of all light sources.
All bulbs in working order. All the same color. Spares available.
Arrange access to circuit breakers or computers controlling lighting.
Access, too, for window shade controls and security systems.
Be sure timers and light sensors can be adjusted for proper exterior lighting at dusk and at dawn.

For photography of interiors, be sure to consider the following:

All tenants and neighbors notified about the photography?
Public and private spaces clean?
All furniture installed?
Paintings hung? Sculpture and other artwork in place?
Flowers and plants available? Props arranged
Permission for moving (and replacing) personal objects?

Arrange a safe place for the photographer to store equipment.

Photographer may need client participation to obtain property and model releases.

Another good article on hiring a architectural photography in on the Contract Magazine website