

Definitions: “Design” v “Design” v “Design Activities”

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Summary

Different connotations are attached to the term “design” in regard to the practice of architecture and when referring to design activities as part of submissions to the Chief Building Official.

Background

The term “design” and variants of the term connote different meanings in different contexts in regard to the practice of architecture.

In daily practice, Architects refer to “design” in terms of preliminary design, schematic design, design development and specifically as a verb in describing the process of conceptualizing a building project, whereas engineers tend to refer to “design” as including not only schematic (or preliminary) design, but also the final construction documents. The colloquial use of the term design by Architects is generally in alignment with the dictionary definition:

“**Design**” as defined by the Concise Oxford Dictionary as a noun means, “a preliminary plan, sketch or concept, for the making or production of a building, machine, garment, etc.”, and as a verb, to “produce a design for” (a building, machine, picture garment, etc.)

However, for purposes of administration of the *Architects Act* and Regulation 27 under the act, the following terms are used as defined:

1. “**Design**” as defined in the *Architects Act* means a plan, sketch, drawing, graphic representation or specification intended to govern the construction, enlargement or alteration of a building or a part of a building;
2. “**Graphic representation**” as defined in the *Architects Act* means a representation produced by electrical, electronic, photographic or printing methods and includes a representation produced on a video display terminal;
3. “**Practice of architecture**” as defined in the *Architects Act*, means,
 - (a) the preparation or provision of a design to govern the construction, enlargement or alteration of a building,
 - (b) evaluating, advising on or reporting on the construction, enlargement or alteration of a building, or
 - (c) a general review of the construction, enlargement or alteration of a building;
4. “**General review**”, in relation to the construction, enlargement or alteration of a building, as defined in the *Architects Act*, means an examination of the building to determine whether the construction, enlargement or alteration is in general conformity with the design governing the construction, enlargement or alteration, and reporting thereon;

A relatively new term, “design activities”, was introduced in an amendment to the *Building Code Act, 1992* in subsection 15.11.(5) and referenced in the amended Building Code (BC). Design activities relates to matters governed by the BC, and care should be taken to understand the differences between this term and other terms incorporating the term “design” in regard to the practice of architecture.

“Design activities” under the *Building Code Act, 1992* means:

- The preparation of a plan, specification, sketch, drawing or graphic representation
- Providing information or giving an opinion concerning whether a building or part of a building complies with the building code under the *Building Code Act, 1992*.

If the design, information or opinion is to be submitted to a chief building official in connection with:

- an application for a permit;
- a request for an authorization referred to in subsection B(12) or (13) of the *Building Code Act, 1992*;
- a report based on the general review of the construction of a building or part of a building where general review is required by the Building Code.

Note: With regard to the building code requirements for qualifications and registration, all Architects and Licensed Technologists OAA meet the staged requirements.

Suggested Procedure

Familiarize yourself with the differences between “design” as used in reference to conceptual aspects of a project and as defined in the *Architects Act* and “design activities” as defined in the *Building Code Act, 1992 as amended* and referenced in the BC.

When using the term “design” or “design activities” or derivations of these terms in communications, be aware that the recipients of your communications may have different understandings of the terms from those which you intended. If appropriate for better clarity, indicate the context of the terms used in your communications.

References

Ontario [Building Code Act, 1992](#) as amended,

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