

Integrating building services in the early stages of Architectural design: A primer for Architects and Architectural students

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Abstract - This paper delves into the pivotal role of building services in the initial stages of architectural design, with a primary focus on architects and architecture students. Recognizing the critical interplay between architectural design and building services, this study aims to guide professionals and aspiring architects toward the development of functional and sustainable buildings.

In the contemporary architectural landscape, the integration of building services is increasingly recognized as fundamental to the success of any construction project. As buildings become more complex and sustainability gains precedence, architects must adeptly incorporate building services considerations from the project's inception.

The paper begins by highlighting the key building services involved in the early stages of design, encompassing mechanical, electrical, plumbing, and other essential systems. Emphasis is placed on the synergy between architectural aesthetics and the seamless integration of these services, promoting an interdisciplinary approach that optimizes both form and function.

The educational dimension of this paper is tailored to architecture students, addressing the gap in curricula that often neglects the intricate relationship between architectural design and building services. By incorporating real-world examples and interactive learning exercises, the paper seeks to empower the next generation of architects with the knowledge and skills needed to create spaces that are not only visually compelling but also functionally efficient and environmentally sustainable.

Ultimately, this paper advocates for a paradigm shift in the architectural design process, where building services are not treated as mere appendages but as integral components shaping the very essence of architectural creations. Through a collaborative and informed approach, architects and students alike can contribute to the realization of buildings that stand as testaments to both visionary design and responsible, sustainable construction practices.

Key Words: Building services, architectural design, HVAC, lighting, plumbing, fire safety.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the dynamic realm of contemporary architecture, the synthesis of form and function is no longer an option but a mandate. As the built environment becomes increasingly intricate and sustainability takes center stage, architects find themselves at the nexus of creativity and technical precision.

The title of this research, "Integrating Building Services in the Early Stages of Architectural Design: A Primer for Architects and Architecture Students," encapsulates the essence of a pivotal exploration aimed at reshaping the fundamental approach to architectural practice and education.

Architectural design, traditionally celebrated for its aesthetic prowess, is undergoing a transformative evolution. Beyond the mere visual appeal, the success of a structure is now inextricably linked to its functional efficiency and sustainability. Building services, comprising mechanical, electrical, plumbing, and other critical systems, are no longer relegated to the peripheries of design consideration. Instead, they demand a prominent role right from the project's inception. [1]

Complexity in design requires an interdisciplinary understanding, and building services must be seamlessly integrated into the architectural narrative. The paper seeks to illuminate the advantages of adopting a holistic approach early in the design process, emphasizing the symbiosis between architectural vision and the technical intricacies of building services.

Moreover, the educational dimension of this research addresses a critical gap in architectural pedagogy. Aspiring architects often graduate with a profound understanding of design principles but a limited appreciation for the practical integration of building services. By presenting real-world case studies, practical insights, and interactive learning exercises, this research endeavors to serve as a primer, bridging the divide between creative imagination and technical proficiency. In essence, "Integrating Building Services in the Early Stages of Architectural Design" invites architects and architecture students to embark on a journey that transcends the conventional boundaries of their craft. By advocating for an early, collaborative, and informed approach, we strive to redefine architectural excellence—one where buildings not only captivate the eye but also stand as enduring testaments to functionality and sustainability. [2]

2.1 Bridging Form and Function

- **Interdisciplinary Collaboration:** Explores the importance of collaborative efforts between architects and building service engineers from the inception of the design process. Emphasizes the value of shared insights and expertise to address technical challenges and align design intent with functional requirements.
- **Spatial Planning and Flexibility:** Investigates how building services influence spatial planning and the flexibility of design. Discusses strategies for

architects to create adaptable spaces that accommodate service requirements without compromising the architectural vision. [3]

The site analysis can suggest a preferable location of certain services depending on various factors like site slope, site orientation. thereafter the initial conceptual designs can be derived integrating the tentative location of the services within.

2.2 Mechanical Systems and Architectural Harmony:

- HVAC Integration: Examines the integration of heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems into architectural designs. Showcasing examples where architects successfully balance HVAC requirements with design aesthetics to achieve both comfort and visual appeal.
- Energy-Efficient Design: Explores the architect's role in promoting energy-efficient design by incorporating sustainable HVAC solutions. Discusses how architects can contribute to reducing energy consumption, optimizing building performance, and adhering to environmental standards. [4]

HVAC and ventilation solutions vary depending on the various factors like area and volume of the building, purpose of the space, environmental climatic conditions, desired cooling requirement and number of occupants. The design approaches will vary depending on specific type of use and case to case. These are space consuming services which needs strategical placement of its core components away from other non-compatible services and in accordance to the building regulations.

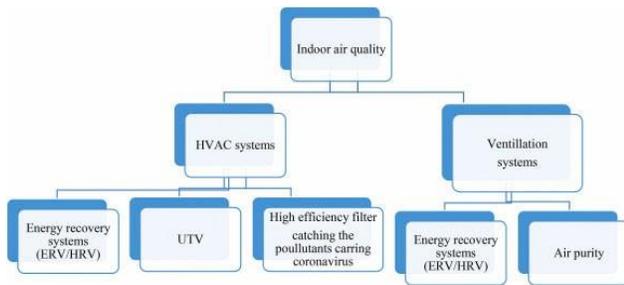


Table -1: Classification of HVAC systems

2.3 Electrical Systems:

- Lighting Design: Investigates the integration of lighting systems to enhance architectural features and create desired atmospheres. Discusses how architects collaborate with lighting designers and electrical engineers to achieve both functional and artistic illumination.
- Technological Integration: Explores the incorporation of smart building technologies, automation, and connectivity into architectural designs. Discusses the architect's role in accommodating advanced electrical systems that enhance user experience and adaptability. [5]

The lighting requirement for a space varies depending upon the type of use. Relevant building standards can be referenced to design the lighting loads for various sections of the building. The building layout can also be designed to optimize its natural lighting by better planning of spaces. Separate electrical ducts are provided to deliver electrical services from the main grid to various floors of the building. The positioning of the ducts must adhere to the building regulations.

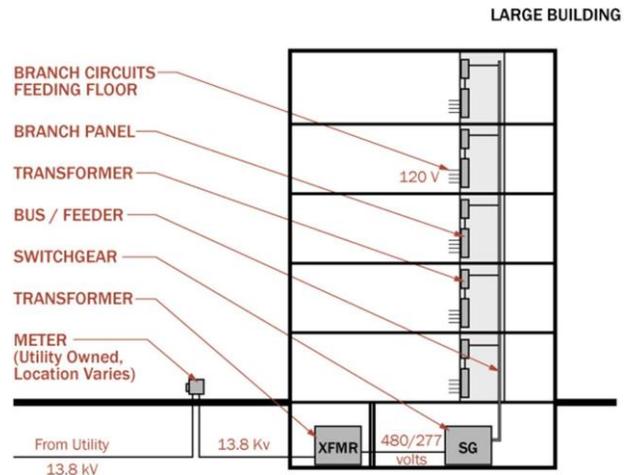


Fig -1: Schematic sketch of electrical services.

2.4 Plumbing Systems and Sustainable Practices:

- Water Efficiency: Examines the integration of plumbing systems with a focus on water efficiency and conservation. Discusses design strategies for architects to minimize water usage, implement greywater systems, and contribute to sustainable water management. [6]
- Material Selection for Sustainability: Explores the architect's decision-making process regarding sustainable material choices for plumbing systems. Highlights the significance of selecting materials that align with environmental conservation goals without compromising structural integrity.

Water is a precious commodity and must be used wisely. The waste water which is generated can be recycled and used for secondary purposes. Thereby reducing the overall consumption of fresh water. Location of the Waste water treatment plant depends on accessibility and topography of the site.

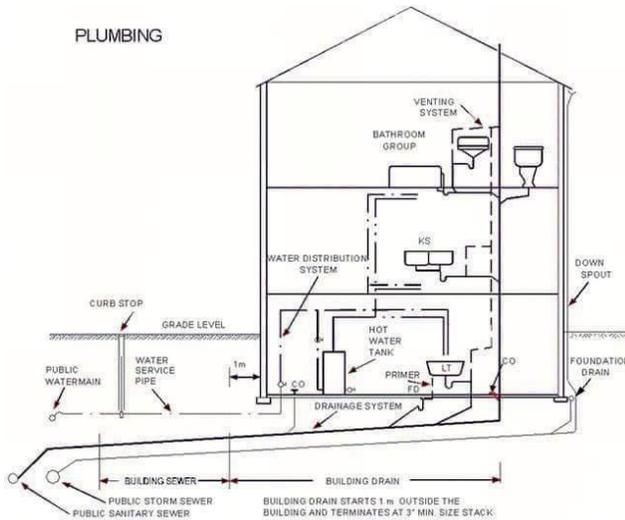


Fig2: Sketch of plumbing services in a building.

2.5. Fire Protection and Safety Measures:

- **Incorporating Fire Protection Systems:** Discusses the crucial role of architects in integrating fire protection systems seamlessly into architectural designs. Emphasizes the importance of balancing safety requirements with design aesthetics. [7]
- **Emergency Evacuation Planning:** Explores how architects contribute to the development of effective emergency evacuation plans, considering factors such as egress routes, access to exits, and the integration of safety systems.

Every building must adhere with the fire safety norms as per the national building code. The positioning of vertical transportation systems, passive and active fire protection systems play a crucial role in case of a fire breakout. Depending on the occupancy, type of occupancy separate fire criteria has to be followed.

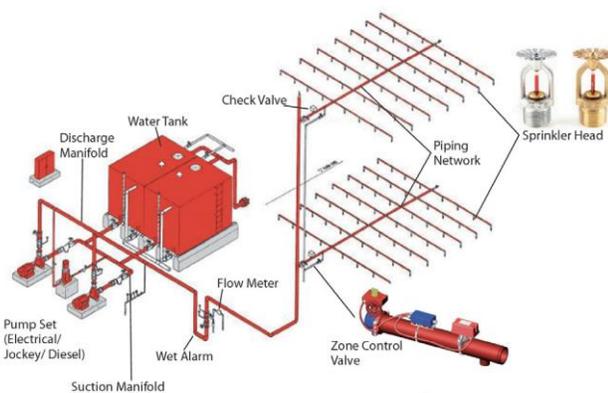


Fig3: Sketch of firefighting services in a building.

2.6. Future Trends and Innovations:

- **Sustainable Innovations:** Anticipates future trends in building services, including innovations in sustainable

technologies, smart systems, and resilient designs. Encourages architects to stay abreast of emerging trends that may shape the future of building services integration. [8]

3. CONCLUSIONS: Forging a New Paradigm in Architectural Design

Incorporating building services from the outset of the planning phase establishes a foundation for a more effective approach to functional building design. Subsequently, designers can confidently delve into refining their conceptual ideas, exploring a myriad of options while maintaining a strong emphasis on functionality. It reinforces the call for architects to embrace a proactive and informed approach, where building services are integral components that elevate both the form and function of the built environment

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Figure-

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