

PRACTICE BULLETIN: Board Guidelines Regarding Project As Built or Record Drawings

Background

In November of 2017, a licensee posed the following question: “If I have not been retained for site supervision, is it mandatory to seal as-built drawings?”

This question has broader implications:

- *Should as-built drawings be stamped/sealed?*
- *Are as-built drawings included under Basic Services?*
- *Is there a difference between “as-built” drawings and “record” drawings?*
- *What are the obligations for as-built documentation if the architect is retained for full-time site supervision?*

References

The Canadian Handbook of Architectural Practice (CHOP) references *As-Built Drawings* in a number of instances.

1. Within the suggested project filing system under 6.6 Submittals;
2. Under Supplemental Architectural Services (under Documentation Services with *Computer Files*);
3. Under Shop Drawing reviews for Site Work (presumably to assess existing conditions);
4. Under the General Items for Field Review Checklist (Item 16 – “remind the contractor to update the drawings regularly as the work progresses”); and
5. Under the Final Field Review Checklist, “As-Built Conformity” it suggests that the architect check for “consistency with approved documents” and “authorization for changes obtained”.

Record Drawings are referenced in several CHOP Checklists (e.g. Coordinating Sub-Consultants, Field Review, Scope of Services, Project Take-Over Tasks).

It is however notable that CHOP does not include any discussion on the As-Built *process*, but does provide the following instruction for Record Drawings:

“If engaged for this service, the project manager will oversee the preparation of CAD record drawings for the client based on the contractor’s “mark-ups” which show changes made to the construction documents. Also, the project manager should return to the client any documentation, such as construction drawings and specifications, which was provided as reference for the design of renovations or additions to an existing building.”

When the architect has been engaged for full-time field review services, CHOP (under Continuous On-Site Representation) appears to contend that this would be a logical part of the scope.

The Ontario Association of Architects together with the Ontario General Contractors Association issued a Joint Best Practice Statement on the topic of As-Built and Record Drawings in October of 2010. It can be found at the following web address:

http://www.oaa.on.ca/images/docs/1305573337_Asbuilt_and_Record_drawings.pdf

It is an important point that this Best Practice Statement distinguishes between As-Built Drawings, Record Drawings and Measured Drawings. Essential to this Guideline are the following definitions:

- **As-built Drawings** are those prepared by the contractor as it constructs the project and upon which it documents the actual locations of the building components and changes to the original contract documents. These, or a copy of same, are typically turned over to the architect or client at the completion of the project.
- **Record Drawings** are those drawings prepared by the architect when contracted to do so. These are usually a compendium of the original drawings, site changes known to the architect and information taken from the contractor's as-built drawings.

Within these definitions lies a vital distinction. *As-built drawings* represent the Contractor's record of site conditions and are typically provided on a copy of the Issued for Construction documents that have been annotated with site condition and site placement/location information as the work progresses (and may ultimately be concealed). Whereas, *record drawings* are prepared in electronic format, delivered to the Client in either as CAD files (.dwg) or .pdf format, and include information from the Contractor's as-built documentation, site instructions and change orders, and any other known variants.

It is also vitally important to note that the OAA/OGCA Best Practice Statement recommends that record drawings prepared by architects not be sealed. This is to "help avoid the possibility that the drawings may be used as part of an application for a building permit without the architects knowledge and involvement".

ALBNL Position

It is the recommendation of the Board that licence holders be very clear with nomenclature based on the salient distinction between as built and record drawings. Only the latter should ever be provided to Clients and these should not be sealed/stamped. Under the terms of General Review services, the architect is typically unable to verify that as-built information provided by the Contractor, which forms a part of the record drawings, is accurate. In some cases, it may in fact be unreliable.

As the Canadian Handbook of Architectural Practice (CHOP) suggests, the Contractor should be reminded of contractual obligations with respect to the documentation of as-built information at the initial job meeting (and perhaps at every regular monthly meeting). This information may be deemed essential to the Client.

It is recognized that the extent to which most Contractors are committed to providing valuable as-built information is limited at best. Many will return the original IFC set provided for as-built mark-up purposes without a single note or entry. It is up to the architect to enforce the contractual obligation on behalf of the Client throughout the progress of the work.

In cases where the architect is retained by the Client for full time site supervision, the recording of as-built information may be deemed integral to such services. The expectations and deliverables should be very clear both in the Client/Architect Agreement and subsequently, in the construction contract. However, the architect should not be obligated to sign/seal such documentation.

The provision of record drawings is not regarded as included with basic services. It is an additional service (with a separate fee) that should be negotiated with the Client at the outset of the project and clarified in the Client/Architect Agreement.

Record drawings should always include a caveat that explains the limitation of the documentation based on the method of compilation. Licence holders should not use the term “as-built” as this implies *complete accuracy*. Nor should the architect imply that record drawings represent the way a building was in fact constructed.

The OAA/OGCA Best Practice Statement offers the following sample statement:

The issuance of this record drawing is a representation by the architect that the construction, enlargement or alteration of the building is in general, as opposed to precise, conformity with the design prepared and provided by the architect, but is not a representation that the construction, enlargement or alteration of the building is in conformity with a design that has been prepared or provided by others.

It further offers the following statement to be prominently displayed on all record drawings:

The revisions to these contract documents, reflecting the significant changes in the Work made during construction, are based on data furnished by the contractor to the architect. The architect shall not be held responsible for the accuracy or completeness of the information provided by the contractor.

Similar wording, as a caveat noted on Record Drawing documentation, can be:

Deviations shown from the stamped Issued for Construction documents are based solely upon information provided to the Architect by the Contractor and is not based on actual site reviews undertaken by the Architect.

Or the following, as recommended by a prominent professional liability insurance provider:

These Record Documents have been prepared based on information prepared by others. The Architect is under no obligation or duty to verify the accuracy and/or completeness of this information and has not done so. The Architect is not responsible for any errors or omission that may be incorporated as a result of erroneous information provided by others.ⁱ

The ALBNL encourages license holders to discuss this matter further with their professional liability insurance provider.

Adopted at a Regular Board Meeting on January 11, 2018.



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ⁱ The Insurance Contract Guide for Design Professionals, *A Risk Management Handbook for Architects and Engineers*; edited by Sheila A. Dixon; Design Professional Group of the XL Insurance Companies, 2007, page 382.