

# **USER MANUAL**

**OA Design+Build+Architecture**

**Company User Manual**

*How We Work, Decide, and Build—Together*

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## **PURPOSE**

### **Who We Are**

OA Design+Build+Architecture is a Minneapolis–St. Paul based design-build firm entering its **32nd year** of practice. We specialize in the remodeling of **older urban homes**, where complexity is the norm, not the exception.

We work at the intersection of **design, architecture, and construction**, using each discipline not as an end in itself, but as a tool to improve quality of life for our clients and the long-term well-being of the community.

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### **Our Mission**

Using the tools of **design, architecture, and construction** to improve quality of life for our clients and well being of the community.

### **Our Tagline**

**Making sustainability beautiful for over 30 years.**

This is not marketing language.

It is a constraint on our decisions.

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### **How We See the Work**

Remodeling older urban homes means:

- Unknown conditions
- Layered histories
- Structural, energy, and durability challenges
- Emotional attachment from clients

Because of this, **rigid systems fail and judgment matters.**

OA operates with clear intent and flexible execution by design.

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## LEADERSHIP

### How Leadership Works at OA

Leaders at OA do not exist to:

- Approve every decision
- Dictate methods
- Be the smartest person in the room

Leaders exist to:

- Define purpose
- Set clear outcomes
- Establish non-negotiable constraints
- Protect values and standards
- Ensure accountability

If leadership feels *hands-off*, something is wrong.

If leadership feels *controlling*, something is wrong.

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## ◆ DEFINED OUTCOMES

### How Authority Actually Works

Leadership defines **what must be true when we're done**, including:

- Performance expectations
- Budget and schedule constraints
- Sustainability goals
- Design intent
- Quality standards

Outcomes are explicit.

Ambiguity here creates chaos downstream.

Teams should never have to guess what success looks like.

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## ◇ ENABLING SYSTEMS

### How the Work Is Supported

Managers translate outcomes into:

- Processes
- Sequencing
- Coordination
- Communication rhythms
- Feedback loops

Systems exist to **make good work easier**, not to control people.

If a system adds friction without adding clarity, it should be questioned.

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## ○ EMERGENT PRACTICE

### How the Work Actually Happens

This is where:

- Craft
- Judgment
- Expertise
- Experimentation

live.

Different projects require different approaches.

We expect variation.

We value learning.

Best practices are inputs—not mandates.

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## FEEDBACK

### Ownership and Learning

If you see a problem, you are expected to:

- Surface it early
- Propose a solution
- Ask for help when needed

Feedback flows:

- Up
- Down
- Sideways

Silence is not agreement.

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## ○ Sustainability Is Not a Department

Sustainability is embedded in:

- Material choices
- Energy performance
- Durability
- Comfort
- Long-term value

We do not trade sustainability for convenience without explicit discussion.

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## How This Model Can Fail

This structure breaks when:

- Leaders avoid clarity
- Managers over-control
- Teams abdicate ownership
- Decisions drift upward
- Learning is punished

If you see drift, say something early.

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## Final Anchor Question

What decision best honors our purpose, our standards, and the people who trust us with their homes?

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## PART 2

### Jobsite Wall Poster — “How Decisions Work at OA”

This poster is designed to be:

- Read in under 30 seconds
- Useful under pressure
- Authority-clarifying without being bureaucratic
- Durable and visually calm for jobsites

### Poster Content (Text Hierarchy)

TOP HEADER (Bold):

**HOW DECISIONS WORK AT OA**

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### PURPOSE

Why we exist

→ If it violates purpose, stop.

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### ◆ OUTCOMES

What must be true when we're done

→ If success is unclear, ask.

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## ⬡ SYSTEMS

How the work is supported

→ If process gets in the way, say so.

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## ○ PRACTICE

How the work actually happens

→ Use judgment. Many right answers live here.

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## FEEDBACK

Learning flows up

→ Problems early are wins.

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## FOOTER (Strong, Quiet Authority)

Do not solve a practice problem with control.

Do not solve a clarity problem with silence.

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