

# Terminology: As-Built Drawings, Record Drawings, Measured Drawings

Contributed by the AIA Knowledge Resources Team

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## SUMMARY

The meanings of “as-built drawings,” “measured drawings,” and “record drawings” can be confusing and misapplied. The AIA receives many queries about the definitions and use of these terms in contemporary practice. Here, the AIA Knowledge Resources staff answers questions on this topic.

## DRAWINGS DEFINED

**As-built drawings:** As-built drawings are prepared by the contractor. They show, in red ink, on-site changes to the original construction documents.

**Measured drawings:** Measured drawings are prepared in the process of measuring a building for future renovation or as historic documentation. They are created from on-site measurements.

**Record drawings:** Record drawings are prepared by the architect and reflect on-site changes the contractor noted in the as-built drawings. They are often compiled as a set of on-site changes made for the owner per the owner-architect contract.

## THE TERMS IN PRACTICE

The exact date when each of these terms entered common use is difficult to determine, but we are comfortable saying that “measured drawing” and “record drawing” have been used for more than 100 years. The implied meaning and overlapping use of the terms have evolved informally and cannot be tied to a moment in time.

The earliest written account we found of any of these three terms is in a 1952 edition of *Architectural Graphics* by C. Leslie Martin, which defined “measured drawing” similarly to the current definition: “The measured drawing gives a description of some detail, element of architecture, or building.” Martin did not mention either of the other terms in this publication.

More than 20 years later, early editions of the *Dictionary of Architecture & Construction*, edited by Cyril M. Harris, defined “measured drawings” and “record drawings” in the 3rd, 2nd, and 1st editions;

the 1st edition was published in 1975. Those definitions, too, are in line with today’s definitions.

## CHANGES IN ARCHITECT’S HANDBOOK

The 13th edition of the *Architect’s Handbook of Professional Practice* (AHPP), published in 2001, defined “as-built drawing” differently than did the 12th edition (1994). Under “as-built drawings,” the 12th edition said only “see record drawings,” whereas the 13th edition lists separate definitions.

The forthcoming 14th edition of the AHPP states, “As-built drawings should not be confused with record drawings” and defines both as-built and record drawings similarly to the definitions given the beginning of this Best Practice.

## USE OF “AS-BUILT” MAY RISK LIABILITY

Risk management advisors recommend that architecture and engineering professionals use the term “record drawings,” saying there is no such thing as an “as-built” drawing or document (Schinnerer, 2002). Because portions of record drawings are based on information provided by outside sources, architects cannot be expected to verify the information (Schinnerer, 2002). Victor O. Schinnerer & Co. recommends including a provision in the professional services contract that acknowledges this understanding. For examples of this language, see Best Practice, “Certifying As-Built or Record Drawings.”

## RESOURCES

### More Best Practices

The following AIA Best Practices provide additional information related to this topic:

- 11.04.01 Certifying As-Built or Record Drawings
- 11.02.01 Defining the Architect’s Basic Services
- 11.02.04 Quality Control: A Working Drawings Preparation Checklist

**For More Information on This Topic**

Burns, John A., ed. *Recording Historic Structures*, 2nd ed. Hoboken, N.J.: John Wiley & Sons, 2004.

Ontario Association of Architects. *Practice Bulletin* B.14, October 2004.

Victor O. Schinnerer & Co. *Record or As-Built Documents*, 2002.

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**Key Terms**

- Design
- Preliminary design
- General design data