



FIELD GUIDE / 2026 EDITION

Your Revit File Cost **\$3,300** to Model. The Sketch: **\$1,380**.

What each kind of source file really costs a studio to turn into a render-ready model, and the short list of files to send so you pay for building, not cleaning.

START HERE

More data is not a better starting point

Most clients assume the richest file makes the cheapest model. Send the full Revit model, the thinking goes, and the studio has everything it needs. Sometimes that is true. Just as often the file arrives carrying three design options, two phases, every duct and every door handle, and the first two days go on taking things out.

A BIM model is built to coordinate construction, not to be looked at. It is organised by discipline, carries geometry nobody will ever see, and exports finishes as names rather than materials. A render-ready model is organised by what the camera sees. Turning one into the other is real work, and it is billed like any other work.

WHAT THE FILE SEEMS TO GIVE US		WHAT WE ACTUALLY OPEN
01	The whole building, ready to render	Structure, MEP and rebar tangled with the facade, all of which has to be stripped out first.
02	Every material specified	Finish names in a schedule. None of them carry textures, so every surface is rebuilt.
03	The final design	Three options in one file and no note saying which one is current.
04	Precise geometry	Curtain walls and roofs that export as broken meshes and render with black streaks.

You are not paying for the model. You are paying for the file.

The same house can be quoted at twice the price depending only on what arrives in the first email. The difference is not skill or margin. It is hours spent deciding what to delete.



Maverick Frame production render.

THE COMPOSITE

One house, two files, two very different bills

Below is a composite of the full BIM models we have been sent for a single two-storey house of about 280 square metres, priced at mid-market studio rates of \$60 an hour. Every line is a problem we meet in real files; none of them is exotic.

WORK BEFORE MODELLING CAN START		BASIS	AT STUDIO RATES
01	Open, audit and export a 1.4 GB central model	4 h	\$240
02	Work out which of three design options is current	2 h	\$120
03	Strip MEP, structure, rebar and hidden families	6 h	\$360
04	Rebuild curtain walls and roofs exported as broken meshes	10 h	\$600
05	Swap 400+ furniture and fixture families for render assets	8 h	\$480
06	Repair flipped normals and overlapping faces	5 h	\$300
07	Rebuild every material; BIM finishes carry no textures	6 h	\$360
08	Rebuild terrain exported as a spiked topo surface	4 h	\$240
Subtotal			\$2,700
Revision C arrives mid-clean-up, partial redo			+ \$600
Modelling from the full Revit file			\$3,300
The same house from a dimensioned sketch			\$1,380

The sketch wins because nothing has to be removed.

From plans, elevations or even a dimensioned sketch, every hour builds something the camera will see: about 23 hours for this house. The Revit file is not the problem. Sending all of it, unprepared, is.

LINE BY LINE

What to send, and how much detail to ask for

The right source file depends on what the model will do after the first render. Answer these before you export anything, and the model is built once, at the detail its later uses need.

BEFORE YOU SEND	WHAT TO DO INSTEAD
01 The whole central model	Export one 3D view with one design option and one phase, and only the categories the camera will see. Ten minutes for your BIM lead, a day saved for us.
02 No authoritative drawing	Add PDF plans and elevations and say which wins if they disagree with the model. Without that, every mismatch becomes a query.
03 Finish names only	Send the finish schedule with product links or photos. A name like 'Oak 04' tells us nothing about grain or tone.
04 Stills only, from set angles	Say so. We model to camera detail and leave the unseen sides simple, which is the cheapest honest model.
05 Animation or a flythrough later	Tell us now. Every side the camera passes needs finished geometry, and rebuilding for motion later costs more than doing it once.
06 360 panoramas or VR later	Interiors need ceilings, floors and the wall behind every camera. Name the rooms so we do not model the whole building to full detail.
07 A real-time viewer or configurator	It needs a lighter model with clean topology. Ask for it explicitly; a render model is too heavy to run in a browser.
08 3D printing or a physical model	It needs watertight, solid geometry at a known scale. That is a different export and should be quoted as such.
09 Revisions arriving as new files	Send changes as marked-up drawings or a list. A fresh 1.4 GB model means auditing everything again to find what moved.

THE ONE PAGE

What clients actually send us for modelling

The clients whose logos sit on our service pages do not send us their whole project server. They send something close to this, usually in the body of an email with a few attachments, and it is enough to quote from and to start modelling.

01	The building	One line: type, size, number of storeys.
02	The source	Plans and elevations, a cleaned model export, or a sketch with dimensions. Say which is authoritative.
03	The design option	Which one is current, if the file holds more than one.
04	What it is for	Stills, animation, 360, a viewer or a print. This sets the detail.
05	What the camera sees	The views or rooms that matter. Everything else stays simple.
06	Finishes	A schedule, product links or photos of the samples.
07	Context	Real neighbours and terrain, or generic surroundings.
08	The format you need back	If you want the model itself, name the software and version.
09	The date and the budget	The real deadline, and a figure or a range.

A sketch is a valid brief

If the design is still moving, a dimensioned sketch and three photos of the materials will get you a first model faster and cheaper than waiting for the BIM file to be finished.

Keep the model once it exists

Ask for the render-ready model to be kept on file. The next image, the animation or the tour then starts from it instead of from your source files again.

WHAT THINGS COST

Market rates and our terms, so you can check any quote

Ranges seen across the market in 2026, freelancer to studio. Use them to sanity-check any quote, including ours.

DELIVERABLE	FREELANCER	STUDIO
Single exterior still	\$100 - 300	\$250 - 600
Single interior still	\$120 - 350	\$300 - 700
Package of 5 - 8 views	\$600 - 1,500	\$1,500 - 4,000
Animation, per minute	\$1,000 - 3,000	\$3,000 - 8,000

Our standard timelines and revision terms. They are what we quote unless a project needs something else, and we say so before work starts.

STAGE OR DELIVERABLE	MAVERICK FRAME STANDARD
First draft of a still	3 to 5 working days from a complete brief
Finished stills, package of 5 - 8	2 to 3 weeks, drafts included
Animation, up to one minute	4 to 6 weeks, storyboard and preview first
Revision rounds included	Two at draft stage, one on the final image
What counts as a round	One consolidated list of comments, sent at once
Rush delivery	Half the time for about 40% more, when the schedule allows

Line up a studio before the deadline is on fire

The most expensive projects we see are not the badly briefed ones. They are the ones briefed in a panic, after the first supplier failed and the launch date did not move. Vet one or two studios while nothing is urgent.

A note on in-house: one artist needs around ten software subscriptions, a workstation and a stack of adjacent skills - modelling, lighting, post-production and client communication. It pays off only when that person is busy every day. Below that, the arithmetic favours outsourcing on its own.

NEXT

Send us what you already have

Plans, a model export, a sketch or photographs, in whatever state they are in. We will reply with a scope, a price and the questions that decide it - as a reply, not a sales call.

The contact form	maverickframe.com/contacts/
Modelling work	maverickframe.com/services/architectural-3d-modeling/
Or simply	reply to the email this guide arrived in.

Written by the people who read these briefs

Dim Kuzmenko is a co-founder of Maverick Frame Studio. The figures in this guide come from our own inbox and our own rate card, not from an industry survey.