

Excerpt taken from American Society of Interior Designers Website

\WORKING WITH INTERIOR DESIGNERS

Working with an interior designer involves some give and take. You will share ideas, and the designer will contribute insights and advice based on his or her talents, knowledge and experience. You will have many details to consider and many decisions to make. Your concept may grow and change as you undergo this process.

Communicate and Maintain Records

The key to a successful project outcome is good communication. The more direct and specific you are, the easier it will be for the designer to successfully meet your needs and expectations. Never hesitate to ask questions about any aspect of the project. Keep notes of your discussions with the designer, and confirm any and all instructions, decisions or changes before they are acted on. If you agree to make changes to the contract, always make sure to put them in writing and have them signed and dated by both parties. Maintain a folder with copies of all plans and contracts, receipts, invoices and other documents.

Before authorizing the designer to begin work, take time to discuss fees, as well as other charges or expenses you may incur. Ask for a cost estimate in writing. The cost estimate should specify the scope of work and the type of fee structure the designer uses. (Bear in mind that the designer is not responsible for the costs of other professional services.) If the designer charges extra for other services—such as reviewing plans or attending meetings with an architect or contractor—these should be listed as well, both by type and rate.

Consider Your Role in the Design Process

Take your responsibilities as a client seriously. If you are going to be very busy or on travel during this process, consider delaying the project until later or getting someone to manage it for you. Remember, if you delegate the decision-making to the designer, you are agreeing to live with those decisions.

To avoid disappointment or unwelcome surprises, follow these guidelines:

- Minimize changes to your plan. Each part of the design will affect the whole. Changes or special requests can require any number of adjustments that will add time and expenses to your project.
- Consider carefully and make notes before you call your designer. Repeated calls are inefficient, expensive and can slow down progress.

- Stay flexible. Decide beforehand where you are willing to compromise and where not.
- Trust your gut. Do not agree to a decision that does not "feel" right to you, no matter how urgent it may seem to be. Take time to request more information, do some research or just reflect.
- Avoid open-ended requests. Tell the designer up front what you are willing to pay in total for a particular item or service.

WHAT DOES A RESIDENTIAL DESIGNER DO?

An interior designer is professionally trained to create a functional and quality interior environment. Qualified through education, experience and examination, a professional designer can identify, research and creatively resolve issues and lead to a healthy, safe and comfortable physical environment.

A decorator fashions the "look" of a space and its outward decoration—paint, fabric, furnishings, light fixtures and other materials. In addition to enhancing the total visual environment, an interior designer creates a space that is functional, efficient and safe.

Among the many areas of expertise a professional designer commands are

- Space planning and utilization, including organizational and storage needs
- Long-term project and lifestyle planning
- National, state and local building codes
- Safety and accessibility
- Ergonomics
- Design for people with special needs
- Conservation and "green" design
- Historic restoration
- Interior detailing of background elements, such as wall and ceiling designs
- Custom design of furniture, drapery and accessories
- Selection of appliances, plumbing fixtures and flooring materials
- Acoustics and sound transmission
- Audiovisual and communication technology
- Construction documents and specifications

For more information, see the definition of interior design developed by the National Council

for Interior Design Qualification, as well as an explanation of the differences between interior design and decorating.

Differences Between Interior Design & Decorating

Many people use the terms "interior design" and "interior decorating" interchangeably, but these professions differ in critical ways. Interior design is the art and science of understanding people's behavior to create functional spaces within a building. Decoration is the furnishing or adorning of a space with fashionable or beautiful things. In short, interior designers may decorate, but decorators do not design.

Interior designers apply creative and technical solutions within a structure that are functional, attractive and beneficial to the occupants' quality of life and culture. Designs respond to and coordinate with the building shell and acknowledge the physical location and social context of the project. Designs must adhere to code and regulatory requirements and encourage the principles of environmental sustainability.

The interior design process follows a systematic and coordinated methodology—including research, analysis and integration of knowledge into the creative process—to satisfy the needs and resources of the client.

Definition of Interior Design

Interior design is a multi-faceted profession in which creative and technical solutions are applied within a structure to achieve a built interior environment. These solutions are functional, enhance the quality of life and culture of the occupants and are aesthetically attractive. Designs are created in response to and coordinated with the **building shell** and acknowledge the physical location and social context of the project. Designs must adhere to code and regulatory requirements, and encourage the principles of **environmental sustainability**. The interior design process follows a systematic and coordinated methodology, including research, analysis and integration of knowledge into the creative process, whereby the needs and resources of the client are satisfied to produce an interior space that fulfills the project goals.

Interior design includes a scope of services performed by a professional design practitioner, qualified by means of education, experience and examination, to protect and enhance the health, life safety and welfare of the public. These services may include any or all of the following tasks:

Research and analysis of the client's goals and requirements; and development of documents, drawings and diagrams that outline those needs

Formulation of preliminary space plans and two and three dimensional design concept studies and sketches that integrate the client's **program** needs and are based on knowledge of the principles of interior design and theories of human behavior

Confirmation that preliminary space plans and design concepts are safe, functional, aesthetically appropriate, and meet all public health, safety and welfare requirements, including code, **accessibility**, **environmental**, and **sustainability** guidelines

Selection of colors, materials and finishes to appropriately convey the design concept and to meet socio-psychological, functional, **maintenance**, lifecycle performance, environmental, and safety requirements

Selection and specification of furniture, fixtures, equipment and millwork, including layout drawings and detailed product description; and provision of **contract documentation** to facilitate pricing, procurement and installation of furniture

Provision of project management services, including preparation of project budgets and schedules

Preparation of **construction documents**, consisting of plans, elevations, details and **specifications**, to illustrate **non-structural and/or non-seismic partition** layouts; power and communications locations; **reflected ceiling plans** and lighting designs; materials and finishes; and furniture layouts

Preparation of construction documents to adhere to regional building and fire codes, municipal codes, and any other jurisdictional statutes, regulations and guidelines applicable to the interior **space**

Coordination and collaboration with other allied design professionals who may be retained to provide consulting services, including but not limited to architects; structural, mechanical and electrical engineers, and various specialty consultants

Confirmation that construction documents for non-structural and/or non-seismic construction are signed and sealed by the responsible interior designer, as applicable to jurisdictional requirements for filing with code enforcement officials

Administration of contract documents, bids and negotiations as the client's agent
Observation and reporting on the implementation of projects while in progress and upon completion, as a representative of and on behalf of the client; and conducting post-occupancy evaluation reports.

Glossary of Terms

"Accessibility" means features of buildings or spaces that enable use by people regardless of their level of ability.

"Building Shell" means the architecture of the existing building, including the framework, the perimeter/exterior walls, the building core and columns, and other structural, load-bearing elements of the building.

"Construction Documents" mean the detailed working drawings that define the work to be constructed. This may include partition plans, power and communications plans, reflected ceiling plans, material and finishes plans, and furniture layout plans, as well as elevations, sections and details, along with the drawings of associated consultants.

"Contract Documents" means the set of documents that form a part of the legal contract for services between two or more parties. These typically include detailed instructions to the contractor, tender forms, construction documents and specifications.

"Contract Administration" means the set of services which may include developing and monitoring schedules and construction costs; ensuring construction is completed in conformance with contracts and design intent; liaison with contractors and consultants throughout the course of construction; reviewing shop drawings and submissions from the contractor; observing and commenting on construction progress; monitoring move-in and furniture installation; and conducting required post-occupancy evaluations.

"Environmental" means the aggregate of the physical conditions of the interior environment that affects the health and safety of the occupants, including air quality and circulation, temperature control, ergonomic layout, physical circulation plan and related matters.

"Maintenance" means the ability of a product or material to be kept to its proper condition, and the work required to sustain that condition over the life of that material.

Glossary of Terms Continued

"Non-structural or non-seismic" means interior elements or components that are not load-bearing or do not assist in the seismic design and do not require design computations for a building's structure. It excludes the structural frame supporting a building. Common non-structural elements or components include, but are not limited to, ceiling and partition systems. These elements employ normal and typical bracing conventions and are not part of the structural integrity of the building.

"Partition" means a wall which does not support a vertical load of a structure other than its own weight, but may support loads attached to it such as cabinetry, shelving or grab bars, and does not extend further than from the floor of an interior area of a structure designed for human habitation or occupancy, to the underside of the deck of that structure.

"Programming" means the scope of work which includes, but is not limited to, conducting research; identifying and analyzing the needs and goals of the client and/or occupant(s) of the space; evaluating existing documentation and conditions; assessing project resources and limitations; identifying life, safety and code requirements; and developing project schedules and budgets.

"Reflected ceiling plan" means a ceiling design that illustrates a ceiling as if it was projected downward and may include lighting and other elements.

"Space planning" means the analysis and design of spatial and occupancy requirements, including, but not limited to, space layouts and final planning.

"Specifications" means the detailed written description of construction, workmanship and materials of the work to be undertaken.

"Sustainability" means the use of resources in such a way that they are not depleted; a method of practice or use of materials that is capable of being continued with minimal long-term effect on the environment.