

LATC

Landscape Architects
Technical Committee

The Design Process
Client Preparation
Contract for Design Services



SELECTING A
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT
for Private Development Projects

SELECTING A LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT



Many unique residential communities, office parks, and retail streetscapes were designed by landscape architects. Although the landscape is visible, its design and design process often is not.

In California, more than 3,000 landscape architects are licensed by the Department of Consumer Affairs' Landscape Architects Technical Committee (LATC). This guide contains information to assist commercial and institutional entities and residential developers in establishing a relationship between the client and the landscape architect, as well as to assist them in understanding the services available, the functions and responsibilities of the landscape architect, and the role of LATC.

Careful planning, selection, and communication with the landscape architect is important to ensure that your project is successful. However, if you feel you have an unresolvable problem with the landscape architect even after following the information in this guide, instructions for filing a complaint are included.

The Practice of Landscape Architecture

The practice of landscape architecture includes planning and designing the use, allocation, and arrangement of land and water resources through the creative application of biological, physical, mathematical, and social processes.

While the name may be somewhat confusing, clear differences exist between landscape architecture and the other design professions. Architects primarily design buildings and structures with specific uses, such as homes, offices, schools, and factories. Civil engineers typically apply technical and scientific principles

to the design of city infrastructure such as roads, bridges, and public utilities. Planners develop a broad overview of development for entire cities and regions.

Landscape architects perform professional work in planning and design of the land for human use and benefit. Based on analysis of environmental, physical, social, and economic considerations, they produce overall guidelines, reports, master plans, conceptual plans, detail designs and construction oversight for landscape-type projects.

Landscape architects deal with complex issues and provide a wide range of services. In addition to the better known areas of streetscape and planting design, landscape architects are trained in visual quality assessment, public facilitation and mediation, environmental impact, wetlands mitigation, urban design, historic preservation, master plan communities, site design, irrigation design and water management.

The following describes services and roles landscape architects can play in private sector projects:

Visual Analysis

Many private projects, including buildings or structures, powerline corridors, landfills, mass grading, master planned communities, highway or mass transit alignments, parks, and open space, create visual impacts that affect the surrounding areas or vistas from significant public viewpoints. Landscape architects assess the visual impacts of various solutions using techniques ranging from simple sketches to sophisticated computer imaging.

Public Facilitation and Mediation

The use of a participatory community outreach program is increasingly becoming a part of obtaining project approvals. This is especially important when users and uses may change over the life of a project. Landscape architects analyze user needs and integrate them into creative solutions that also meet other project objectives. Furthermore, landscape architects can facilitate the public input process by preparing press releases, conducting public meetings, and documenting the outcomes of such input.

Historic Preservation

Historic preservation ranges from research and documentation of historic plans and gardens to renovating facilities in a manner that is consistent with historic themes. This service also integrates new work to complement historic elements.

Site Planning

Site planning could involve the evaluation of alternative sites, as well as the layout of a series of established program elements in a specific site. Site planning components may include pedestrian circulation, parking, entries and exits, recreational facilities, service

areas, waterscapes, plazas, or a variety of residential, institutional, commercial, resort, and retail architectural elements. Working within the prescribed budget and physical constraints of the land and surrounding land uses, the landscape architect strives to find the optimum solution from both practical and aesthetic points of view.

Master Planning

Master planning also deals with the arrangement of program uses within the constraints of the site and budget, but generally looks at a much longer time frame. Master plans are decision-making tools that provide frameworks within which to evaluate program or project changes. The plans are dynamic documents that should be updated as public policy, economic conditions, or project opportunities change.

Environmental Planning

Landscape architects assess the environmental conditions of a natural resource and develop proposals for the preservation, mitigation, or combined development and preservation of an environmentally sensitive area.

Design

Design encompasses a large area of expertise. Generally, services include conceptual design, construction documents (bid or contract documents), and construction observation and administration (to verify compliance with the design intent) of such items as planting, paving, lighting, recreational facilities, small nonhabitable structures, signage, site furnishings, fountains, irrigation, grading, drainage, erosion control measures and, other similar work.



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Team Management

Landscape architects understand a variety of issues and related professions. Such teams ensure that design creativity and technical rigor are united and balanced.

Construction Observation and Administration

Landscape architects observe the installation of a project to assure compliance with the construction documents, prepare clarification change orders, resolve site and design issues, and review submittals.

Post Construction

Landscape architects assess site problems and design issues, including drainage and maintenance concerns.

Permit Processing

Landscape architects assist owners in submitting plans and other information to obtain the necessary permits for projects. They determine landscape water consumption, provide recommendations regarding the protection of existing plants and habitat areas, and review plans for consistency with Americans with Disabilities Act standards.

The Design Process

Typical landscape architectural services might include:

- ◆ Assistance in defining a project program
- ◆ Analysis of site opportunities and constraints
- ◆ Development of preliminary drawings which fit the project program within site and budget constraints
- ◆ Design compliance with applicable codes and ordinances
- ◆ Review and refinement of preliminary plans with client and agency revisions, as necessary
- ◆ Obtain project approvals from jurisdictional agencies
- ◆ Presentations to public agency and community groups
- ◆ Team consulting with other professionals
- ◆ Providing construction drawings (details and specifications) which are used to obtain bids and implement design
- ◆ Assistance in obtaining bids from contractors
- ◆ Construction observation of work in progress for consistency with design intent
- ◆ Landscape maintenance guidelines and monitoring

Client Preparation

Five key points will help ensure a fair and equitable selection process, while drawing the best responses from qualified firms.

Determine what is needed and write a clear, concise request that includes the following information:

- ◆ **Clarify goals of the project.** Describe the intended goals of the project—whose goals they are and the key issues.
- ◆ **Who is the client.** Define to whom the firm will report (contact person), how the decision-making process will work; time lines; what the lines of communication are; and how the consultants will receive approvals.
- ◆ **Project background.** Describe the location of the project; the type of work envisioned; funding sources and requirements; and the project's history, if applicable. Collect maps and any other pertinent site information (photos, articles, project program).
- ◆ **Define services required.** Be as specific as possible. Make provision for firms to submit additional services that they think may be helpful, but be sure they are described separately.
- ◆ **Determine deliverables.** Be very clear about the end product expected and time lines for such deliverables.

Research the market. Know the firms and the range of professions specializing in the services requested.

Develop a clear selection process. Emphasize the knowledge, skills, and abilities that will lead to a successful project.

Set a realistic budget. Review cost assumptions with the consultant.

Finding and Selecting a Landscape Architect

You will probably want to obtain the names of several landscape architects. Ask other professionals (architects, engineers, other developers) who have worked with landscape architects for recommendations. The LATC does not maintain a referral service and cannot recommend landscape architects. However, consumers are encouraged to call the LATC to confirm that a landscape architect is licensed and to determine whether complaints have been filed against him or her.

You may want to contact several landscape architects for proposals to compare relevant qualifications, prices, and quality of work.



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The Interview

Be sure to give the same information to each landscape architect so that their project proposals are based on the same criteria. Begin the interview by asking the landscape architect if he or she has a California license, and get the license number. Ask whether the landscape architect has insurance and the limits of liability. To obtain an idea of the services the landscape architect is able to provide, his or her qualifications specific to the project, and what the costs will be, you will probably want to ask the following questions:

Previous Experience

- ◆ Has the landscape architect designed the kind of work you want and how recent was that experience?
- ◆ May you see examples of his or her work that are similar to your project?
- ◆ May you have the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of the clients whose projects the landscape architect is using as examples?

Services

- ◆ What services did the landscape architect provide during the design, bid, and implementation phases for the examples provided?
- ◆ What services will be provided for your project during each of these phases?
- ◆ Who will be providing these services, the landscape architect; his or her employee(s); sub-consultants or others?
- ◆ What quality assurance/control measures does the landscape architect employ?

Fees

- ◆ What is the basic or estimated fee for the entire project? What services are included?
- ◆ If another consultant is necessary (i.e., structural engineer), will they be included in the basic fee?
- ◆ What additional costs (i.e., blueprinting, telephone, mileage) does the landscape architect anticipate for your project? What markup does he or she apply to them?
- ◆ Identify any task which would be considered additional services.

Interpersonal Communication

- ◆ Can the landscape architect meet your time schedule for the project?
- ◆ Will the landscape architect work well with the design team?

Before Making the Final Decision

Verify Licensure

If you haven't already done so, contact the LATC to verify the license status of the landscape architect and determine whether complaints have been filed against him or her.

Check References

Check the references the landscape architect provided.

Consider asking the following questions:

- ◆ Did the landscape architect meet required schedules and budgets?
- ◆ Were the clients pleased with the landscape architect's work and their relationship with him or her?
- ◆ Did the landscape architect listen to the clients' concerns and did he/she attempt to resolve them?
- ◆ Would they hire the landscape architect again?

If possible, visit the projects the landscape architect presented as examples of his or her work.



Contract for Design Services

The California Business and Professions Code section 5616 requires a landscape architect who agrees to provide professional services to provide a detailed written contract. The written contract shall include, but not be limited to, all of the following:

- (a) A description of services to be provided by the landscape architect to the client.
- (b) A description of any basis of compensation applicable to the contract, including the total price that is required to complete the contract, and method of payment agreed upon by both parties.
- (c) A notice which reads: "Landscape architects are licensed by the State of California."
- (d) The name, address, and license number of the landscape architect and the name and address of the client.
- (e) A description of the procedures the landscape architect and client will use to accommodate additional services.

Elements not specifically required that would be helpful include:

- ◆ Clarification of who pays sub-consultant fees if they are required
- ◆ The title and address of the landscape project
- ◆ Clarification of the costs that are not included in the basic fee
- ◆ Clarification of what will require additional costs and who will pay for them
- ◆ Clarification of whose approval is required before additional costs are incurred
- ◆ A statement that the landscape architect needs written approval before proceeding with the next phase of work
- ◆ A schedule of when, and in what amounts, you must pay the fees, including the payment at termination of the project
- ◆ The amount of the retainer fee and where it will be applied
- ◆ A procedure for either party to terminate the agreement before design services are completed, and a procedure for handling disputes between parties should the need arise
- ◆ Your responsibilities during the life of the agreement
- ◆ Clarification of who owns the landscape architectural documents
- ◆ Signatures of both parties on the agreement and the date the agreement was signed



What to do if a Problem Occurs

You have a right to receive careful and professional service from the landscape architect. Even if you have read and followed this guide and done everything possible to prevent problems, you may feel that you have a complaint about your landscape architect. What should you do?

Be sure to discuss the problem with the landscape architect. If the landscape architect is violating a provision in the written agreement, review the agreement and other relevant documentation with him or her. If you are unable to settle the problem, do not hesitate to call or write to the LATC Enforcement Coordinator, under the California Architects Board (Board).

The Board has the power, duty, and authority to investigate alleged violations of the Business and Professions Code, Division 3, Chapter 3.5 Section 5616 et seq. The Board is given specific authority to receive and investigate complaints against its licensees and to discipline violators accordingly. Disciplinary actions may include license revocation or suspension, civil penalty citations, civil injunctions, and/or referral to local district attorneys for criminal prosecution.

The Board takes actions against landscape architects for:

- ◆ Fraud in obtaining a license
- ◆ Impersonation; use of an assumed or other licensee's name
- ◆ Aiding unlawful practice
- ◆ Signing other's plans
- ◆ Permitting misuse of name
- ◆ Fraud in the practice of landscape architecture
- ◆ Negligence or misconduct
- ◆ Incompetency or recklessness
- ◆ Violation of the Rules of Professional Conduct

For inquiries regarding the Landscape Architects Practice Act, licensure as a landscape architect, or questions regarding complaints against any licensee, please contact:

Landscape Architects Technical Committee,
2420 Del Paso Road, Suite 105, Sacramento, CA 95834
Telephone: (916) 575-7230 • E-Mail: latc@dca.ca.gov
Web Address: www.latc.ca.gov



This consumer guide was prepared with an emphasis on private development projects. Consumer guides for public sector and residential projects are also available through the LATC.