

NEVADA STATE BOARD OF ARCHITECTURE,  
INTERIOR DESIGN AND RESIDENTIAL DESIGN

# A Consumer's Guide To Hiring

Architects  
Residential Designers  
Registered Interior Designers



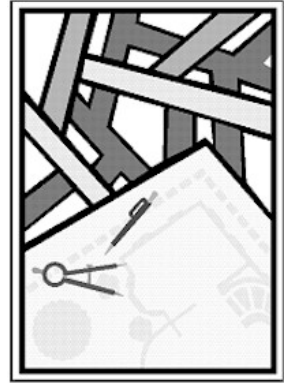
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UNSHUN QUALITY  
FALL 20  
PART 2

Reflected Ceiling Plan  
Lighting Description





# INTRODUCTION

Are you thinking of constructing a home, doing some remodeling, or building a new structure? Are you considering hiring an architect, registered interior designer or residential designer to do the job?

The Nevada State Board of Architecture, Interior Design and Residential Design (NSBAIDRD) is responsible for the administration, regulation and enforcement of the professions of architecture, registered interior design and residential design in Nevada. The Board reviews applications, administers examinations, registers qualified applicants and regulates the professional practice of registrants throughout the state.

The Board is comprised of nine members, appointed by the Governor for three-year terms. There are five architects, two registered interior designers, one residential designer and one public member.

Because of the complex and technical nature of professional design services, misunderstandings sometimes arise between the consumer and the design professional. The NSBAIDRD hopes that this consumer guide will prevent such problems from occurring by providing information on:

- ◆ What architects, registered interior designers and residential designers do – and when you should hire one;
- ◆ How to select a design professional;
- ◆ Contracting with a design professional; and
- ◆ If you do have a problem with a registrant (or non-registrant practicing in this area), how you can file a complaint with the Board.



## **PRACTICING AS A DESIGN PROFESSIONAL IN NEVADA**

Anyone calling himself an architect, registered interior designer or residential designer, or offering these services, must be registered with the NSBAIDRD.

Architects must pass a national exam, as well as have a degree in architecture from a program accredited by the National Architectural Accrediting Board and complete a national internship program.

Registered interior designers must pass a national exam. Applicants who passed an older version of the national exam must also pass the Nevada Supplemental Exam. They must also have a degree from an interior design program accredited by the Foundation for Interior Design Education Research and two years of interior design experience.

Residential designers must pass a comprehensive exam administered by the State, as well as have a combination of five years education and experience.

### **WHAT DOES AN ARCHITECT DO?**

Nevada law defines the practice of architecture as the “rendering of services embracing the scientific, esthetic and orderly coordination of processes which enter into the production of a completed structure which has as its principal purpose human habitation or occupancy.”

Architects plan and design structures and spaces, as well as administer the construction of building projects. They prepare plans, specifications and contract documents, and provide preliminary studies, consultations and evaluations. Architects often work with other design professionals and consultants to take a job from conception to completion.

## **WHAT DOES A REGISTERED INTERIOR DESIGNER DO?**

Nevada law defines practicing as a registered interior designer as “the rendering of services to enhance the quality and function of an interior area of a structure designed for human habitation or occupancy.”

Registered interior designers take the needs and goals of the client, as well as safety factors, into consideration when designing a space. They also prepare drawings, contract documents and specifications for interior areas. Registered interior designers can collaborate with other design professionals, as well as administer bids and contracts as an agent of the client.

## **WHAT DOES A RESIDENTIAL DESIGNER DO?**

Nevada law defines the practice of residential design as the “rendering of services embracing the scientific, esthetic or orderly coordination of processes which enter into the production of a completed single-family dwelling unit or multifamily dwelling structure that does not exceed two stories in height and is composed of not more than four units in that structure.”

Residential designers prepare plans, specifications, and contract documents in relation to building and designing residences. They administer the construction, provide preliminary studies, consultations and evaluations, and offer advice and direction in relation to their projects. Residential designers often collaborate with other design professionals and consultants throughout the design process.

## **DO I HAVE TO HIRE AN ARCHITECT, REGISTERED INTERIOR DESIGNER OR RESIDENTIAL DESIGNER FOR EVERY BUILDING PROJECT?**

Under Nevada law, you are not required to hire an architect, registered interior designer or residential designer for every building project. Some professional engineers are also qualified to design structures, and licensed contractors can provide drawings for their own construction activities.

The following situations are also exempt from hiring an architect, registered interior designer or residential designer:

- ◆ Personally preparing plans and drawings for your own private residential use;
- ◆ Plans and drawings for farm and ranch buildings; and
- ◆ Selection and layout of decorative accessories, wall coverings (i.e. wallpaper or paint), floor coverings (i.e. tile or carpeting), window coverings (i.e. draperies or blinds), lighting fixtures and furniture, **if not regulated by building codes or other laws** governing the alteration or construction of a structure.



## SELECTING A DESIGN PROFESSIONAL

After deciding on the scope of your project, you will need to determine which design profession, or professions, is best suited for the project.

Next you will want to gather the names of several architects, registered interior designers and/or residential designers. To do this you can ask people you know for recommendations or you might want to try one of the professional associations. Many of the design community's professional associations, such as the American Institute of Architects (AIA), the American Society of Interior Designers (ASID) and the International Interior Design Association (IIDA), have referral services. Some design professionals specialize in certain types of work, such as single-family homes, offices, health care or hospitality design. Others work in a variety of areas.

After receiving the referrals, you will need to decide which professional will be able to best provide the services you need at a cost you are willing to pay.

The NSBAIDRD does not maintain a referral service and cannot recommend architects, registered interior designers or residential designers. However, the Board can advise you if someone is registered and whether any disciplinary action has

been taken against the registrant. A basic roster of registrants can be found on the NSBAIDRD web site. For more detailed information on a registrant, please call the Board office.

## **BASIC CRITERIA**

Prior to selecting an architect, registered interior designer or residential designer, you will need to develop basic criteria for your project to provide to the design professionals you are considering. At a minimum, the basic criteria for your project should include:

- ◆ The services you expect the architect, registered interior designer or residential designer to provide
- ◆ The size, qualities and functional requirements of your structure or space
- ◆ What your planned budget is and how it will be financed
- ◆ Anticipated starting and completion dates



## **REQUEST FOR INFORMATION**

You should request information on qualifications and experience from several registered design professionals. After reviewing their qualifications you may want to interview some of them to determine their understanding of your project and their compatibility in working with you. During the selection process you may want to ask some or all of the following questions:

### **General Information**

- ◆ Do you have a valid certificate of registration from the NSBAIDRD? If so, what is your registration number?
- ◆ Do you carry insurance? If so, what type(s)? How long have you carried each and what are the policy limits?
- ◆ How long have you been in business?
- ◆ How many persons are employed by your firm?
- ◆ How have you kept current in your practice?
- ◆ Do you intend to use consultants for this project? If so, whom do you propose to use, what are their



qualifications and your experience with them?

- ◆ What percentage of your practice involves the type of work I have proposed for this project?

## Experience

- ◆ Have you recently done projects similar to what I am proposing? How many?
- ◆ May I see examples of projects you have done that are similar to mine (sketches, photos, plans)?
- ◆ May I have the names and contact information of the clients whose projects you are using as examples?
- ◆ What was the actual construction cost versus the budgeted cost for these projects?



## Services

- ◆ What services did you provide for these clients during the design, bidding and construction phases?
- ◆ What services do you propose to provide for my project during each of these phases?
- ◆ Who will provide these services: you, one of your employees or a consultant?

## Fees

- ◆ What will the fee schedule be?
- ◆ How will your fees for my project be determined and what services do the fees cover?
- ◆ Will you provide probable construction cost estimates for my project?
- ◆ If consultants are necessary, are their fees included in your basic fee?
- ◆ What additional costs (i.e. permit and other governmental fees) or services (i.e. time spent obtaining permits and other approvals) do you anticipate for my project?

- ◆ How do you establish your fees for additional services and reimbursable expenses?
- ◆ Will there be a charge for redesign if it is necessary to meet the construction budget?
- ◆ Will there be additional charges for changes required by the building department or other agencies?
- ◆ How are additional charges computed for design changes requested by me?

### **Time**

- ◆ Can you meet my proposed schedule?

## **MAKING THE FINAL DECISION**

You may call the NSBAIDRD to verify the registration status of the design professional(s) you are considering. Although they may show you a certificate of registration indicating they can practice in Nevada, the registration might be invalid if it has not been renewed or has been revoked or suspended. If you contact the Board, we can also inform you of any past disciplinary action against the registrant.

Be sure to check the references given to you and, if possible, visit the project sites used as examples of the design professional's services. Be sure to ask references the following questions:

- ◆ Did the architect, registered interior designer or residential designer adhere to your schedule and budget?
- ◆ Were you pleased with his/her services and your working relationship with him/her?
- ◆ Did he/she listen to your concerns and attempt to resolve them?
- ◆ Would you hire him/her again?



## CONTRACTING WITH A DESIGN PROFESSIONAL

The NSBAIDRD recommends that you always have a written agreement for design and/or construction services with an architect, registered interior designer or residential designer. Many design professionals prepare their own agreements or have them prepared by an attorney. Others use standard contracts written by their professional associations, such as the American Institute of Architects (AIA) and the American Society of Interior Designers (ASID).

Whatever agreement is used for professional services, it is a legal document that may bind you and the design professional to certain obligations for the life of the project and, in some cases, beyond project completion. It should include the specific services that you and the design professional have agreed upon and the conditions under which these services are to be rendered. Otherwise, issues could arise that may be both expensive and time-consuming to resolve.

Review the agreement carefully. It is your and the design professional's responsibility to understand and follow the agreement. You have the right to question and change the terms of the agreement before signing it, even if it is in printed form. Because it may be a binding legal document, you may wish to have your legal counsel review the agreement before you sign it. You should retain an original copy of the signed agreement. In addition, you should not make agreements with other parties regarding the project without first notifying the architect, registered interior designer or residential designer with whom you have the primary agreement.



## **RECOMMENDED ITEMS IN THE CONTRACT**

As with any legally binding document, you may first wish to consult with your own legal counsel before entering into a contract. Some provisions that should be included in the agreement include:

- ◆ The name, address and registration number of the architect, registered interior designer or residential designer, the name and address of the client and the address of the project
- ◆ A description of services to be provided and what procedure the design professional and client will use to accommodate additional services
- ◆ Whether construction observation services are included
- ◆ Whether assistance with establishing a contract between a contractor and owner will be provided
- ◆ What disciplines of consultants might be needed (i.e. engineering, geotechnical, landscape, etc.)
- ◆ The time frame in which the design services must be completed
- ◆ The anticipated start date of construction
- ◆ When the client's approval must be given before the design professional proceeds to the next phase

- ◆ What procedure will be used by either party to terminate the contract
- ◆ How disputes between parties will be handled should the need arise (for example, arbitration or mediation)
- ◆ Who is responsible for keeping project accounting records and when they may be reviewed
- ◆ A schedule of when and in what amounts payments are due
- ◆ The amount of the retainer fee and how/when/where it will be applied
- ◆ An itemized listing of the design professional's basic services and his/her maximum fees
- ◆ A description of any basis of compensation applicable to the contract and method of payment agreed upon by both parties
- ◆ A list of reimbursable costs that are not included in the basic fee
- ◆ A list of what services constitute additional services and at what cost
- ◆ The construction budget and what items it includes
- ◆ A clarification of whose approval is required before these additional service costs are incurred
- ◆ How final payment is computed if the agreement is terminated
- ◆ A provision for cost escalation or contingencies for delay of construction or for changes in the project scope during construction



## KEEPING RECORDS

It is very important to document the progress of your project and establish a historical record. Be sure to keep copies of all documents you sign, as well as copies of documents you give to the architect, registered interior designer or residential designer.

You should also keep a written record of all verbal communications that relate to your project. Do not assume the design professional you hired will interpret everything you discuss with him or her the same way you do. After you meet with your design professional about the project, write a memo to him or her confirming your understanding of the discussion. These memos can help prevent misunderstandings and may prove invaluable should a problem arise later on.

You may also want to write notes to yourself about the progress of your project. Photographs or video taken at regular intervals, with the date noted, can be very useful.

Be sure to keep good financial records as well. Make sure that your design professional sends you detailed invoices. Keep records of when each payment is made and its amount. Consider including a provision in your contract requiring your written approval before additional costs are incurred.



## MONEY

Before you sign the written agreement, clearly establish the total amount of money (including contingency funds) you are willing to pay for the design and construction of your project, the number of payments you will make to the design professional and the amounts and schedule of these payments. Be sure this fee schedule is recorded accurately in the agreement and that you make each payment to the design professional as called for in the agreement. If you secured a loan for the project, ensure that it covers both the cost of design services and construction costs.

## CONSTRUCTION HINTS

The construction of your project should be performed by a properly licensed and experienced building contractor. You should consider keeping the design professional through the construction phase of the project. Consumers often run into problems during this phase. A knowledgeable design professional can help anticipate potential problems and handle issues that do arise.

If your contract with the architect, registered interior designer or residential designer is only for design services, it is important that the construction documents (building plans and specifications) you receive from him or her are complete enough for you to obtain bids from one or more contractors, as well as complete enough for the contractor to construct your project.

Do not assume that the plans your design professional gives you are sufficient for the building contractor simply because you were able to obtain a building permit. Documents submitted to building departments contain minimum levels of design and construction information – only what is needed to determine the building’s safety. Discuss the plans with your design professional and building contractor to ensure that they are suitable for bidding and construction purposes.





## **WHAT TO DO IF THERE IS A PROBLEM ON THE PROJECT**

You, the consumer, have a right to receive careful and professional service from the architect, registered interior designer or residential designer you have hired. Even if you have read and followed this guide and have done everything possible to prevent problems, you may still feel that you have a complaint about the design professional you hired. What should you do?

First, discuss the problem thoroughly and calmly with your architect, registered interior designer or residential designer. If he or she is violating your written agreement, review the agreement and other relevant documentation with him or her. If you and your registered design professional are unable to settle the problem, your next step should be to contact the NSBAIDRD.

### **WHAT CONSTITUTES A COMPLAINT?**

The NSBAIDRD has the power, duty and authority to investigate alleged violations of NRS 623. The NSBAIDRD is also given specific authority to receive and investigate complaints against its registrants and to discipline violators accordingly. Do not hesitate to contact the NSBAIDRD about any questions or concerns you may have. The NSBAIDRD takes actions against registrants for:



- ◆ Fraud, negligence or misconduct;
- ◆ Signing plans and drawings not created under their responsible control;
- ◆ Aiding unlawful practice;
- ◆ Conflict of interest;
- ◆ Incompetence or recklessness; and
- ◆ Other violations of NRS 623 and the Code of Ethics.

Disciplinary actions may include license revocation, suspension or probation, reprimand and the levying of fines.

The NSBAIDRD also investigates complaints about unlicensed practice and pursues individuals practicing illegally.

The Board cannot represent private citizens in court. The filing of a complaint does not prohibit you from filing a civil action at the same time, nor does it affect the statute of limitations for filing suit.

## **HOW TO FILE A COMPLAINT**

You may contact the NSBAIDRD at the address and phone numbers listed at the end of this booklet. For your convenience, the Board provides a Consumer Complaint Form. The form is not required, but can serve as a guideline. The form can be found on the Board web site or you can contact the main office for a copy.

The most effective complaints are those that contain firsthand, verifiable information. Any written statement providing the necessary information can be used to file a complaint. It is important to include as much detail as possible and any documentary evidence you might have (i.e. copies of plans, agreements, etc.).

For more information about the complaint process, please contact the Board or see the NSBAIDRD brochure, “Filing a Complaint: And Other Information About the Investigation and Enforcement Process.”

# HOW TO CONTACT NSBAIDRD

**Written correspondence can be directed to:**

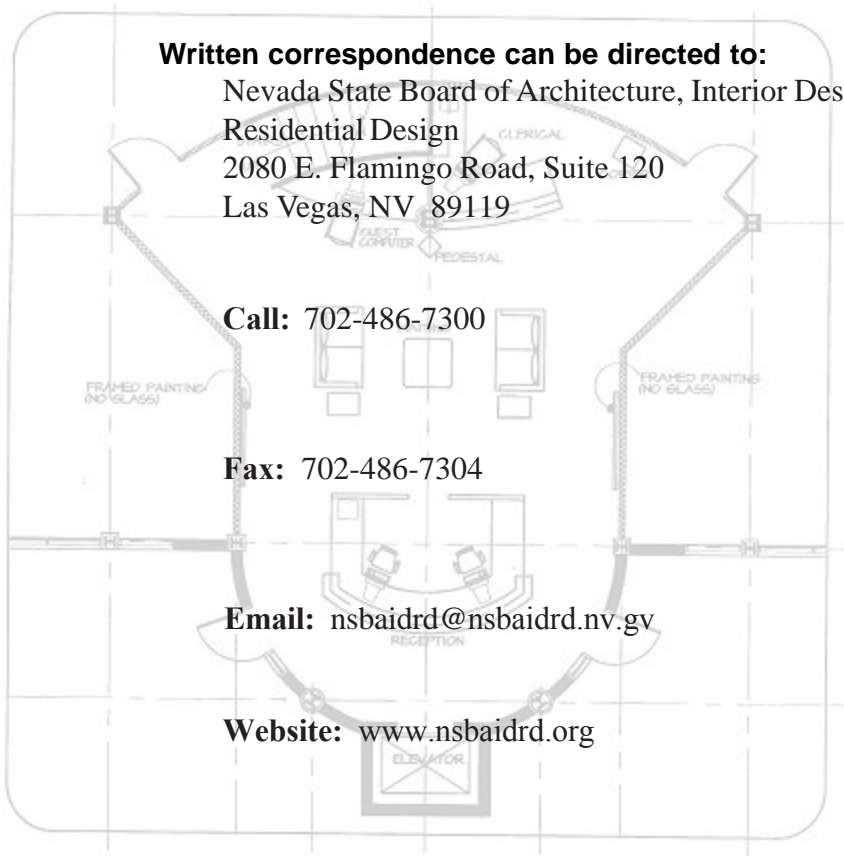
Nevada State Board of Architecture, Interior Design and  
Residential Design  
2080 E. Flamingo Road, Suite 120  
Las Vegas, NV 89119

**Call:** 702-486-7300

**Fax:** 702-486-7304

**Email:** [nsbaidrd@nsbaidrd.nv.gov](mailto:nsbaidrd@nsbaidrd.nv.gov)

**Website:** [www.nsbaidrd.org](http://www.nsbaidrd.org)



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