

How to Hire an Interior Designer

If you are planning to build or renovate a home or office, you need someone to safely guide you through the legalities of building permits, building and fire codes, municipal by-laws, etc.

Under Alberta's building codes, you need an architect's or licensed interior designer's stamp on your plans if your building or project is larger than 5000 square feet – on the ground floor.

Interior designers are trained not only in the aesthetic aspects of design, but also in needs analysis, project and facilities management and problem-solving. In many aspects they actually create the interior environment. The professional designer is able to design from the inside out, often around an existing lifestyle.

Before making the decision as to which interior designer you will choose to help with your project, consider doing the following:

1. Create a "wish list" of all the things to be done.
2. Develop a budget (with a minimum and maximum amount that you are prepared to commit to the project).
3. Develop a timeline in which you want the project completed.
4. Seek out a referral list from a professional design association such as the IDA. IDA's registered members have seven years combined educational background (usually university level) and professional work experience, and have passed formal written examinations set by the National Council for Interior Design (a North America-wide governing body) and/or the Alberta Association of Architects (licensed designers).

Provisional members of the IDA have completed their educational requirements (a minimum two-year college program or university degree) and are currently practicing to gain professional work experience.

Both registered and provisional members carry mandatory personal professional liability insurance coverage. In addition, they usually are required to maintain currency through attendance at continuing education sessions throughout their professional career.

5. Contact the designer(s). Present your wish list, budget, and timeline. Be sure to ask if there is a charge for the initial consultation. If interested in your project, ask the designer to send you a proposal outlining the following:
 - Scope of work to be performed by the designer
 - Timeline
 - Budget, including all fees and contingency allowances
 - Use of sub-trades (if required) and supervision of these trades
 - Proof of professional liability insurance coverage
 - Proof of other coverage as may be required (e.g., Workers Compensation Board etc.)
 - References (at least three based on similar project scope and budget)
6. Depending on the scope of your project, you may want to request estimates from several potential candidates: be as detailed as possible, to ensure that they all bid based on the same assumptions.
7. Check the references thoroughly.



8. Consider the rapport between you and designer(s) to whom you have spoken. Choosing the right person to design your living or working space is more than a marriage of convenience. You need to ensure that you can get along with the designer you choose. There needs to be open communication. The designer must understand your needs, be organized, and be able to communicate properly with the sub-trades and other professionals involved in your project, both in terms of providing adequate detail in drawings, and giving necessary information to project team members in a timely fashion.
9. Choose your designer and sign a contract that outlines the basic parameters of the project (scope, budget, fees, etc.). An interior designer who is a member of the IDA will have access to a standard contract that meets all the legal requirements for the Province of Alberta.

IDA is the professional designation of qualified, ethical designers in Alberta.
Ensure your interior designer is a member
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