

# USING A DESIGNER



Designed by Deborah Noland Witherington, ASID  
Noland & Associates, LLC

## WELCOME

The success of any interior designer ultimately rests on his or her ability to satisfy you, the client. Over my career, I have found that client satisfaction depends on three key skill areas:

- Artistic and technical skills
- Interpersonal communication skills
- Business and project management skills

This brochure, adopted from materials developed by the American Society of Interior Designers (ASID), is designed to give you – as a prospective residential client – some practical knowledge regarding choosing a designer, discussing fees and budgets, finalizing agreements, and understanding your responsibilities and rights as a client.

I feel confident that should you choose Noland & Associates, LLC for your design needs, you will be very satisfied with all aspects and phases of the design process. With over 30 years of experience in both commercial and residential design, I bring a wealth of design and project management experience to every project I accept.

You will find I am good with hard-to-please clients; accurate in details, colors and specifications; thorough in management and documentation of a project from programming to installation; attentive in listening, communication and planning skills; comfortable in meeting budget restraints while maintaining design integrity; skilled in the extreme differences of contemporary and traditional designing; polished in the art of final appointments that complete a space; and well traveled and exposed to quality options of design throughout the world.



Deborah Noland Witherington, ASID

Thank you for your interest in Noland & Associates, LLC. I look forward to discussing your specific needs with you in more detail.

## INTERIOR DESIGN

Whether you're building a new home or remodeling a single room, you want the finished space to be attractive, comfortable and functional. It needs to fit the way you live, as well as reflect your personal style and taste.

Interior design addresses all these concerns and more. Images of beautifully appointed and arranged rooms are usually what first come to mind when one thinks of interior design. Color, fabric, furniture, art and ornamentation are indeed important elements in the overall design. How the environments we inhabit look and feel greatly affect our mood and sense of well-being.

But interior design also involves many practical and technical considerations that affect comfort, function and safety. Among these are lighting, acoustics, space planning, organization and storage, scale, accommodation of special needs, fire safety and compliance with local building codes.

Interior projects include new construction, renovation, historic restoration and model homes. Specialty areas within the home include the kitchen, bath, home theater, home office, and home health care and fitness areas.



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## DESIGN SERVICES

### THE PROFESSIONAL CHOICE

An Interior designer has aesthetic, practical and technical expertise in all the elements that make up an interior environment. He or she understands how people use and respond to these elements, not just individually but as the elements interact with one another. Any number of services and suppliers can provide and install items for the home. Some offer advice on selecting colors, patterns and materials or on arranging the furniture and accessories in a room. When you hire an interior designer, you get the benefit of an experienced professional who can solve problems, help you avoid costly mistakes and, most importantly, create an attractive, affordable space designed specifically to meet your lifestyle needs.

Professional interior designers can do so much more than recommend furniture, fabrics and colors. They have a creative eye and artistic flair, but that's only the beginning. In addition to their in-depth knowledge of products, materials and finishes, professional designers have the training and expertise to plan, schedule, execute and manage your project from start to finish. They know and work closely with many vendors, contractors and other service providers, coordinating and orchestrating the entire design team. Designers also provide specification and purchasing services to procure materials, furniture, accessories and art, some of which you might not be able to find on your own.

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
- Audio/visual and communication technology
- Construction documents and specifications

## DEFINE THE PROJECT

### COMMUNICATING YOUR NEEDS

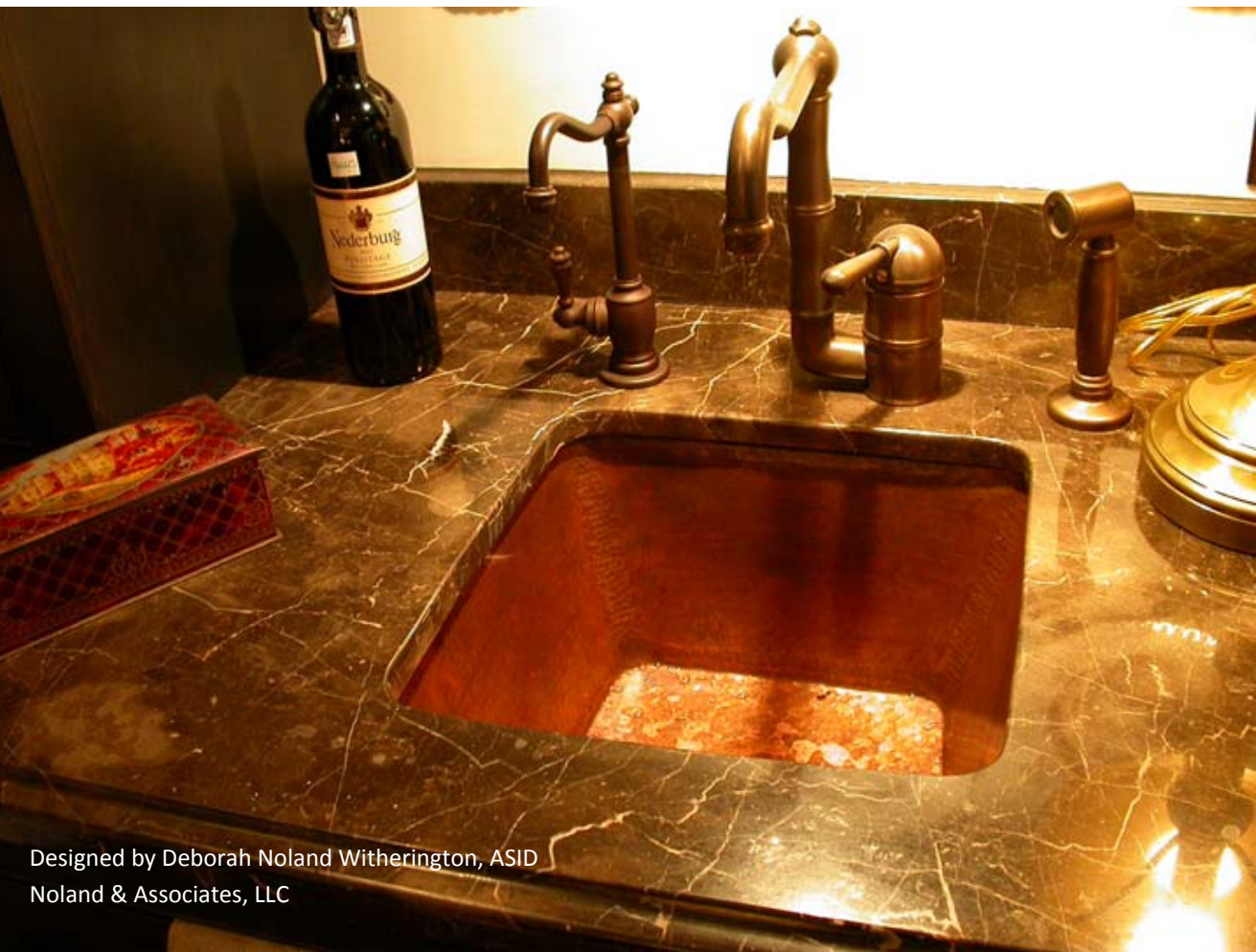
Before you ever speak to a designer, take some time to think about what you want, what you need, what you can afford and what is most important to you. The designer you hire will be able to advise you on specifics, but to get the result *you* want, it is important to do your homework first. The time you spend will be well worth it. Start by answering the following questions as completely and specifically as you can:

- Who is going to use the space?
- What activities will take place there?
- How long do you plan to occupy the space?
- What is your timeframe for completing your design project?
- How will you finance the project? What is your budget?
- What kind of look or feel do you want the space to have?
- If you are modifying an existing space, what do you currently like about the space?
- What do you most want to change? Why?
- What changes do you need to have and which would be nice to have?

Putting together an idea folder or scrapbook of your likes and dislikes, wishes and dreams is a great way to begin the design process. Look for pictures of rooms or styles that appeal to you, swatches of fabric, paint color cards, furniture catalogs or brochures, etc. These will stir your imagination and help the designer better understand your preferences and tastes. Include information and pictures of appliances, plumbing fixtures, lighting fixtures, cabinet and door hardware, and flooring materials as well, if these will be elements in your project.



The creative aspects of interior design can be exciting and fun, but never forget that it is also a business — and you are the one who will have to live with the finished project. Your satisfaction with an interior design project depends a great deal on the designer you select and how well you work with him or her. By following the guidelines below, you can help ensure a good working relationship and a successful outcome.



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# Sample Scope of Services

## PROGRAMMING AND SPACE PLANNING

- Interview to determine client needs, schedules and budgets.
- Establish functional and aesthetic goals.
- Inventory existing furnishings and other items to be reused.
- Provide space plans with furniture layouts.
- Assist in developing the project timeline.

## INTERIOR DESIGN

- Develop budgets on all interior finishes and furnishings, as well as budgets for interior improvements.
- Assist in material, finish and furnishings analysis, recommendations and specifications.
- Design all interior details.
- Provide sketches, presentation boards or notebooks of all interior selections and furnishings.
- Review and coordinate furniture layouts with lighting and electrical plans.
- Coordinate fine art and decorative accessories.
- Coordinate interior plant selections and placement.

## CONSTRUCTION DOCUMENTS

- Demolition/new partition plans
- Telephone/electrical plans
- Reflected ceiling plans/lighting plans
- Wall and floor finish plans and schedules
- Interior details and design as required, including cabinets, millwork, etc.
- Furniture installation drawings

## PROJECT ADMINISTRATION

- Coordinate and review drawings with contractors.
- Maintain project schedules.
- Review all bids and pricing.
- Provide on-site inspections during construction.
- Provide assistance during move-in.
- Provide punch lists of all work to be completed.

## DISCUSS FEES AND BUDGET

There is no such thing as a “typical” fee for an interior designer. Many factors, including those mentioned above, influence what a designer may charge for his or her services. Most residential designers use one of the following methods, or combine methods, to set their fees and may negotiate to suit a client’s particular needs:

- **Fixed fee (or flat fee)** – The designer identifies a specific sum to cover costs, exclusive of reimbursement for expenses. A fixed fee usually applies to the selection of finishes and products attached to your structure, and is most often arrived at on a square footage basis.
- **Hourly fee** – Compensation is based on actual time expended by the designer on a project or specific services.
- **Cost plus** – A designer purchases materials, furnishings and services (e.g., carpentry, drapery workrooms, picture framing, etc.) at cost and sells to the client at the designer’s cost plus a specified percentage agreed to with the client.

In addition to the fee structures outlined above, designers may require a retainer before beginning a design project. A retainer is an amount of money paid by the client to the designer and applied to the balance due at the termination of the project. The retainer is customarily paid upon signing the contractual agreement in advance of design services.

At one time, cost plus at full retail mark-up was the most widely used fee structure for residential designers. It is becoming more common now for designers to charge an hourly rate for design services with a more modest cost plus for products from Designer Markets such as High Point or New York, or from other wholesale furniture outlets now available to the public. The fixed fee for the selection of attached finishes and fixtures, may be used at the beginning of your project, in order to avoid an hourly rate, but is generally reserved for new construction and/or major renovations. In addition to the designer’s fees, there are other costs to consider. Only you can decide what a reasonable budget for your project is. If you have concerns about price, discuss them with the designer. Don’t be shy about asking the designer to help you optimize your budget. But be realistic, too.



You may need to scale back your project or consider having the work done in stages. If you are concerned about the quoted cost of furniture or furnishings, ask the designer to provide you with a list of options. A final word about cost: How you choose to furnish your interior and how you work with your designer will have tremendous impact on the final cost of the project.

Items such as antiques or custom-made furniture, and modifications that involve altering or moving load-bearing walls or beams will significantly increase the cost of your project, as will requesting changes mid-project or making excessive demands on the designer's time. The more research and planning you do before you start, the more you will be able to help keep costs down during the project.

### **FINALIZE ALL AGREEMENTS IN WRITING**

Once you have selected a designer you want to work with, ask him or her to provide you with a letter of agreement or contract for the project. Do not make any oral agreements, pay the designer any money, or authorize any work to be done on the project, including giving the designer permission to begin looking for furnishings or researching styles or patterns, until you have an agreement endorsed by both parties.

### **REQUEST A COST ESTIMATE**

At the onset of work, request a cost estimate for products and materials you think you will need on your job. A room by room analysis is a good way to start, and is a reality check before too much time is spent.

### **COMMUNICATE WITH THE DESIGNER AND MAINTAIN RECORDS**

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, skills 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. 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.

### PRACTICE GOOD “CLIENTHOOD”

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 you are 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, but be fair to the designer if deadlines cannot be met due to this delay.
- **Avoid open-ended requests.** Tell the designer up front what you are willing to pay *in total* for a particular item or service.
- **Make request by email.** Keep communication clear when possible by using email to not only confirm meetings but to express what you hope to accomplish at these meetings. This will help the designer be ready with answers as to what you need.

## KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

If you follow the guidelines above, you are unlikely to encounter problems with your designer. However, in the event a problem arises, there are agencies that can help. If your state has interior design regulations, you can contact the board or agency that monitors compliance. If your state currently does not regulate interior design, contact the department of consumer affairs or consumer protection. All members of ASID agree to abide by the Society's *Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct*. If you believe an ASID member has behaved unethically, please contact the ethics coordinator in the government and public affairs department at ASID headquarters through their website at [asid.org](http://asid.org) or at (202) 546-3480.