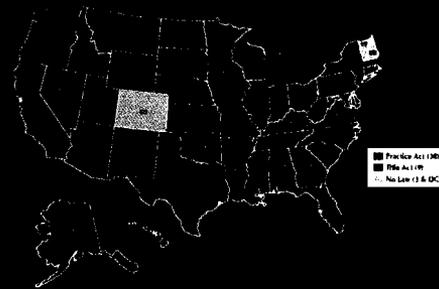




Licensure



What is Landscape Architecture?

The work of landscape architects surrounds us, in the planning of sites such as office plazas, public squares and thoroughfares. The design of parks, highways, housing developments, urban plazas, zoos and campuses reflects the skill of landscape architects in planning and designing the construction of useful and enjoyable places. Landscape architects are trained to work on such diverse projects as community master plans, site planning, local road design, pedestrian walkways, wetland construction and mitigation, park and trail systems, erosion control, historic preservation, site stormwater management and more.

Licensure is a critical state function for protecting the public from unqualified or incompetent individuals who engage in professional practice that has an impact on the public health, safety, and welfare. If an uneducated, untrained, untested individual were to perform the functions outlined above, the results could be disastrous. In just one example, a contractor with no background in landscape architecture designed and installed a landscape project with drainage pitched toward a residence. This not only caused property damage to the house and yard, but the poor drainage resulted in a serious injury to a resident when the weather turned cold and the water turned to ice. In contrast, landscape architects are trained and tested in grading and drainage principles, including the need to maintain positive drainage throughout a site.

Landscape architecture, like other design professions, has an impact on the public at large. Negligence will harm the client through higher construction costs and environmental cleanup costs. Moreover, the potential for physical harm is much greater for the community at large – children on playgrounds, teenagers on skate parks, lone runners out for exercise on a poorly lit pathway, drivers who cannot see oncoming traffic due to poorly designed highway medians, and other citizens.

Of the 47 states that have recognized the high level of regulation necessary for the landscape architecture profession, 38 have practice acts that regulate the practice of landscape architecture and restrict the use of the title 'landscape architect' to licensees. The remaining nine "title act" states have weaker protection for consumers, allowing anyone to practice landscape architecture as long as they do not call themselves landscape architects.

Protections and Benefits for Consumers and the General Public

There is a substantial body of evidence to show that landscape architecture malpractice can have serious consequences for the public in terms of physical injury and property damage. A study of relevant cases includes the following:

- negligent lighting specification resulted in the electrocution of homeowner;
- failure to specify a resilient playground surface resulted in paraplegia of child;
- incompetent design of a parking lot led to the death of a visitor who fell to his death when there was no barrier between the parking lot and the driveway below;
- insufficient storm drainage for a shopping center parking lot caused massive overflow into the street, causing a traffic accident that rendered the driver quadriplegic;
- inoperable irrigation systems have had to be re-excavated and replaced; and
- inadequate reinforcement of patio and related design flaws led the patio to come apart and slide downhill.

Licensure ensures that only competent professionals are performing landscape architecture that impacts the public health, safety, and welfare.

Landscape architects are called upon for complex services that require highly technical skills, making it difficult for prospective customers to evaluate the quality of the work. Licensure as a measure of competence provides guidance to a consumer that ensures that a professional is competent to provide landscape architectural services. Licensed landscape architects are required under law to act on the client's behalf. They can be held personally responsible for their actions and can be sued or criminally prosecuted for errors or negligence.

Many jurisdictions require site, grading, stormwater, or erosion control plans to be stamped by specific licensed professionals. Costs for services may be higher when a landscape architect must obtain a seal of another design professional before moving ahead with a project, even though t

**Economic Affairs Committee Meeting
September 9, 2005**

Exhibit #6

Ensuring Competence: Education, Experience, and Examination

Licensure protects the public from malpractice by ensuring that licensed landscape architects are competent to do their work, and providing a clear message to a consumer that any licensed landscape architect is qualified – by education, experience, and testing – to do the job. Licensed landscape architects must fulfill educational and experience requirements that prepare professionals to protect the public even before undergoing the rigorous three-day exam, the Landscape Architect Registration Examination. Only after successfully completing this entire process can an individual be deemed competent.

Education and experience standards

ensure that each licensure applicant has been prepared to practice, and the LARE provides a definitive measure of competence.

Accreditation and Education: Accreditation is the safety net that ensures that every landscape architecture graduate has the basic knowledge necessary to practice landscape architecture. The Landscape Architectural Accreditation Board accredits 77 bachelor- and master-level programs. The LAAB evaluates programs against standards that ensure the essential components leading to entry-level professional competence. An LAAB-approved curriculum includes: landscape architectural history and theory; design theories, methodologies and applications; landscape planning and management at various scales and applications; site design and construction, such as grading, drainage and circulation; plants and ecosystems; construction materials, methods, technologies and applications. Landscape architecture students begin by developing drafting, graphic, and computer skills applicable to a variety of design problems. As the students progress, study becomes more intense, requiring development of design and site construction skills, including surveying, grading, road alignment, surface and subsurface drainage, plant selection, and applying them to real situations in the design studio.

Experience: Landscape architects, like other design professionals, understand that there is no substitute for experience in the preparation for practice of the profession. This is why landscape architects are required to work under the supervision of a licensed landscape architect before being eligible for licensure. Some states allow at least part of this

experience to be fulfilled in other ways, such as under the supervision of an licensed allied design professional. Most states require applicants to show that their experience was derived from a diverse practice of landscape architecture.

Examination: Every licensure law requires new applicants to pass the Landscape Architect Registration Examination (LARE). It tests the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary for a licensed professional to protect the public health, safety and welfare. Candidates are graded on how their solutions affect the public health and safety issues and not on the aesthetics of the design.

The LARE is a five-section examination given over a three-day period, with three multiple choice sections and two graphic design sections. The multiple choice sections cover *Legal and Administrative Aspects of the Profession; Analytical Aspects of Practice; and Structural Considerations and Methods of Construction*. The skills tested in these sections include: project development; contracts; construction administration; data gathering and analysis; site suitability; land use planning; principles of design; stormwater management; erosion control; hydrology; hydraulics; and irrigation.

The graphic design sections of the LARE cover *Planning and Site Design and Grading, Drainage and Stormwater Management*. The skills tested include: site planning for buildings; layout of playground equipment; vehicular and pedestrian circulation; roadway alignment design; site lighting layouts; manipulation of contours and spot elevations; calculation of slopes, grades and volumes of material; removal of stormwater; changing the elevations of the existing landscape to accommodate structures, parking and circulation; design surface and subsurface storm drainage systems, including hydraulic characteristics and storm drain connections, to effectively and safely remove storm water from a site.

While education and experience standards ensure that each licensure applicant has been prepared to practice the profession, the LARE provides a definitive measure of competence that is designed with the sole intent of protecting the public health, safety, and welfare. Only those that pass through this three-step process can assure a client that they are competent to practice.

Support for Licensure

We urge your support of legislation that provides effective regulation of the profession of landscape architecture. Licensure ensures that only competent, trained professionals are performing landscape architecture work that impacts the public health, safety, and welfare.



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