

Licensure

Fact Sheet

What is Landscape Architecture?

The landscape architecture profession is broad and diverse in scale and scope. It encompasses the analysis, planning, design, management, and stewardship of natural and built environments through science and design.

Landscape architects are trained to work on site planning, roadway design, pedestrian and vehicular circulation, wetland construction and mitigation, park and trail systems, erosion control, historic preservation, and stormwater management—just to name a few aspects of the profession.

Any and all of these functions can have an impact on public health, safety, and welfare. If an uneducated, untrained, untested individual were to perform these functions, the results could be disastrous. Licensure protects the public 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.

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

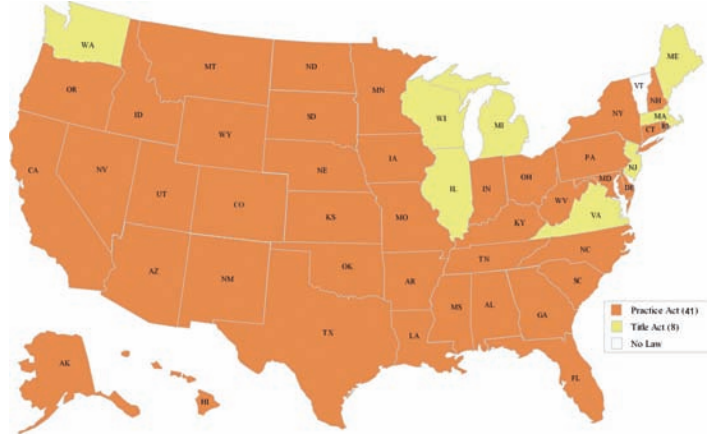
Protections and Benefits for the Public

Of the 49 states that have recognized the high level of regulation necessary for the landscape architecture profession, 41 have practice acts that regulate the practice of landscape architecture and restrict the use of the title “landscape architect” to licensees. The remaining eight “title act” states have weaker protection for consumers, allowing anyone to practice landscape architecture as long as they do not call themselves landscape architects.

A practice act is necessary because of the real danger to the public in an unregulated environment. Below are some of the aspects of landscape architecture that can cause serious physical injuries, property damage, and various financial harms.

Grading, Drainage, and Stormwater Management

Landscape architects provide grading, drainage, and stormwater plans that specify how soil on a site should be moved, the precise slopes necessary to provide for proper drainage, and the size of stormwater systems needed to handle a specified amount of rainfall and runoff. These



modifications can affect public health and safety with potential injury where: slopes do not meet stability criteria, trip hazards occur, proper drainage is not maintained, and drain inlets and sewers are negligently designed. In one example, insufficient storm drainage for a shopping center parking lot caused massive overflow into the street, causing a traffic accident that rendered a driver quadriplegic.

Site Design

Landscape architects develop comprehensive designs for public and private sites of all scales. This design activity also includes designing site features, which can include paved areas, walkways, stairs, ramps, parking areas, pedestrian circulation systems, and small structures. Depending on the level of detail, site plans may include plantings, site furnishings, fences, walls, and a variety of



Landscape architects design recreation areas that keep children and families safe, active, and healthy.



other built features that landscape architects are called upon to incorporate into outdoor settings. Negligent layout of site features creates risks to public health and safety when access is not appropriately restricted, when incompatible activities are located in direct contact, and when opportunities for crime are enhanced by design that interferes with visibility and surveillance. In one case, a local government was held liable for a defective design after a pedestrian died when a path was obstructed.

Roadway Design

Landscape architects develop roadways, parking lots, medians, and other transportation elements that ensure driver and pedestrian safety while also maintaining environmental quality. Numerous cases have shown that even the vegetation can be a major factor for public safety when it obstructs views, causing harm to motorists. The skills involved in grading and drainage, as described above, also apply to roadway design. Licensed landscape architects are educated, trained, and tested to avoid other potential hazards associated with paved areas, including pooling of water and erosion damage.

Ensuring Competence: Education, Experience, and Examination

To protect the public's health, safety, and welfare, 49 states require landscape architects to be licensed. Becoming licensed generally requires a college degree in landscape architecture, completion of a period of supervised practice, and passing the national licensing examination. Although there is some variety in the education/experience combinations, every state requires passage of the standard licensing examination.

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 (LAAB) accredits 79 bachelor- and master-level programs in the United States.

Experience

Landscape architects, like other design professionals, understand that there is no substitute for diverse 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.

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 public health, safety, and welfare. Candidates are graded on how their solutions affect the public health and safety issues, not on the aesthetics of the design.

The LARE is a five-section examination, including two graphic design sections. The skills tested include: project development, contracts, construction administration, site suitability, principles of design, stormwater management, erosion control, hydrology, and irrigation.

The graphic design sections cover planning, site design, grading, drainage, and stormwater management. This ensures necessary skills are tested, including 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; and the design of surface and subsurface storm drainage systems, including hydraulic characteristics and storm drain connections, to effectively and safely remove stormwater 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 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 practice of landscape architecture. Licensure ensures that only capable, trained professionals are performing landscape architecture work that impacts public health, safety, and welfare.



Landscape architects provide innovative stormwater management solutions that cut pollution, reduce flooding, and maintain public safety.

COURTESY MURASE ASSOCIATES



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