

# INTERIOR DESIGN IN OHIO

When most people hear the term **"interior designer"**, they tend to envision someone who selects paint colors, arranges furniture, or curates decorative finishes. While these aesthetic choices are certainly part of the profession, they represent only a fraction of what interior designers actually do.

In reality, interior designers play a critical role in shaping environments that **directly affect the health, safety, and welfare of the public**. Their work goes far beyond visual appeal—it involves technical expertise, regulatory knowledge, and a deep understanding of human behavior and spatial functionality. For example, Accessibility, Egress, Life Safety, and Material selections all have impact on the public.



## Accessibility

Interior designers must ensure accessories are mounted at accessible heights, doors have proper clearance for wheelchair access, and hardware is easy to operate. Grab bars, mirrors, and sinks should be installed to accommodate both wheelchair users and standing individuals. Corridors must remain clear and wide for safe navigation. These design considerations ensure accessibility and safety for all users.



## Egress

Designers must ensure that egress doors are equipped with panic hardware, allowing easy disengagement of locks during emergencies to prevent chaos and fatalities. Emergency egress paths must meet accessibility guidelines, leading to fire-rated exits and outdoor areas of minimum specified widths. Proper planning of these routes is crucial for safety, as issues with egress contribute to a significant percentage of fire-related fatalities. NCIDQ-certified designers are trained to implement these life-saving solutions effectively.



## Life Safety

Designers must ensure proper placement of exit signs, fire alarms, and sprinkler heads to meet safety standards. Exit signs should guide occupants to exits efficiently, while fire alarms must cover all areas, including rooms and corridors, to alert in case of a fire. Sprinkler heads need to be placed correctly to ensure full coverage and avoid interference from construction elements. NCIDQ-certified designers are trained to implement these life safety measures to enhance safety in emergencies.



## Materials

Designers must select flooring materials with appropriate slip resistance, durability, and cleanliness to reduce the risk of slips and falls, a leading cause of injury. They use the coefficient of friction (COF) to choose materials that minimize these risks. Additionally, NCIDQ-certified designers prioritize healthful materials, considering factors like infection control, ease of cleaning, and durability, especially for high-touch surfaces that require frequent disinfection.

## DEBUNKED! Correcting the Top Myths on Interior Design



Interior Designers don't need sign and seal permitting privileges. Their work does not require permits and most interior design firms are large firms where architects and engineers do the sealing.



Interior designers are highly educated and trained professionals who operate in accordance with the Building Code, as well as state and federal laws—including the Americans with Disabilities Act. Designing interior design elements that comply with these rules require a building permit. To execute projects efficiently and independently, interior design firms must have the ability to obtain building permits without unnecessary barriers. However, many small interior design businesses in Ohio currently face a significant hurdle: they must engage another licensed design professional with sign-and-seal authority, work under that individual's responsible control, and rely on them to seal and submit plans for permitting. This process not only limits autonomy but often comes with substantial fees, placing a financial strain on smaller firms.



NCIDQ Certified Interior Designers do not have the education, experience, or testing to provide the independent health, safety, and welfare services a bill of materials regulation on Interior Design would grant to them.



NCIDQ Certified Interior Designers undergo formal education, thousands of hours of supervised experience, and a nationally recognized 11 hour certification exam to prepare for protecting the health, safety, and welfare of the public in practice. NCIDQ Certified Interior Designers are qualified to design the non-loadbearing, non-seismic, and non-structural interior design element scope of work.



Introducing a Title Act for Registered Interior Designers in Ohio will create a bureaucratic and mandatory occupational license.



A Title Act with Permitting Privileges does not create a mandatory license. Interior Designers may choose to be voluntarily registered with the State to achieve "sign and seal" authority within the scope of interior design practice. Additionally, a Title Act does not restrict any individual from referring to themselves as an interior designer or require them to become a "Registered Interior Designer". This regulation would not affect any other design professionals' ability to practice in their profession.

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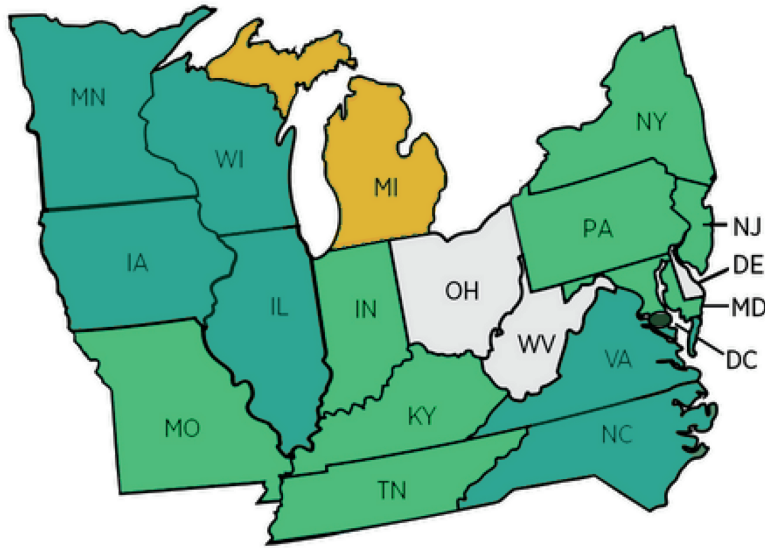
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ADVOCATE



## Advocacy Efforts

Since the early 2000's, interior designers of Ohio have been making the case for legal recognition for their profession. Most recently in 2020, grassroots efforts were put forth to introduce HB402, which was put on pause during the COVID 19 pandemic. In 2018-2019, HB504 was introduced and passed in committee, but ended when other bills took precedence in the Senate. In 2017 a bill was introduced that would place a tax on interior design services. This led the IIDA Ohio/Kentucky chapter to host their first ever Capitol Day to advocate against this bill, which was eventually defeated.

Ohio is surrounded by states that uphold reasonable regulation for NCIDQ certified interior designers, except for West Virginia and Michigan. However, Michigan is actively pursuing regulation. Over 50% of states across the country legally recognize the profession of interior design.

While interior design is a wide spectrum of careers, there are a few key components that distinguish an interior designer from a decorator, and from an architect



## What does an Interior Designer do?

### NCIDQ CERTIFIED INTERIOR DESIGNER

Selection, specification, planning, procurement and coordination of:

- Modular systems and movable partitions
- Furniture, fixtures, and equipment (FF+E), specifications, bidding, and procurement services
- Interior finishes in compliance with applicable codes and regulations
- Graphics, wayfinding, and signage systems in compliance with applicable codes and regulations

### INTERIOR DECORATOR

Selection and coordination of:

- Artwork, furniture, and decorative elements for the purposes of aesthetic and functional improvements to non-code-impacted interior environments
- Textile selection and design
- Color palette and color theory
- Functional space planning.
- Curation of fine art, decor & accessories
- Specification & design of window treatments.

### SHARED RESPONSIBILITIES

- Programming, planning, design, and project management of interior environments
- Design of non-structural/non-seismic interior partitions and openings
- Design of non-structural building elements
- Application of design strategies to support health, wellness, environmental sustainability, and human experience
- Development of construction documents
- Bidding, construction administration services, and post-occupancy evaluations

### REGISTERED ARCHITECT

- Coordination with civil engineers to place building, structural systems, utilities, roadways, parking surfaces, walking paths, and plantings on site.
- Coordination with landscape architects and designers for building landscaping.
- Design of overall building in compliance with applicable codes and regulations.
- Design of core and shell of a building.
- Stamping drawings for permitting and bid purposes.

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