



## **Working with interior design contracts on commercial projects**

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Interior design is a big business and more and more designers are getting involved in large commercial projects, as well as large residential ones where two or more apartments are combined. If you are thinking of working with an interior designer, you should have an attorney who knows this area of the law review it as carefully as you would a contract with a contractor. I have drafted and reviewed many of these contracts and have never seen two that are the same.

In a recent negotiation with an interior designer regarding a residential gut renovation, I commented that the designer was asking to be paid 90% of her fee before any construction was commenced. My client was concerned because she had asked the designer to spend even more time overseeing construction than usual, since my client does not live in New York City. The interior designer said "Once my drawings are complete, my work is done. I turn it over to the contractor and he follows my well-drafted designs." While it is good to hear that a lot of time goes into the plans, that is by no means the end of the story. Money needs to be held back to cover the designer's services during the contract administration phase which usually lasts for a number of months. If not, you can wind up like a lady who came up to me at one of my seminars and said "I paid the designer in full, but I still do not have a sign-off on the electrical work and she is not returning my calls. Can you help me ?

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