



SO YOU WANT TO BE A LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT?

What is a Landscape Architect?

A landscape architect is a designer who uses art and science to combine the natural and built environments, creating spaces that enhance people's everyday experiences. It is the profession that designs, plans and manages our land.

The term 'landscape architecture' became common after 1863 when Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux designed New York's Central Park. Today, landscape architects deal with the increasingly complex relationships between the built and natural environments.

Landscape architects plan and design traditional places such as parks, residential developments, campuses, gardens, cemeteries, commercial centers, resorts, transportation facilities, corporate and institutional centers and waterfront developments. They also design and plan the restoration of natural places disturbed by humans, such as wetlands, stream corridors, mined areas and forested land. Their appreciation for historic landscapes and cultural resources enables landscape architects to undertake preservation planning projects for national, regional and local historic sites and areas.

Working with architects, city planners, civil engineers and other professionals, landscape architects play an important role in environmental protection by designing and implementing projects that respect both the needs of people and of our environment. This type of sustainable vision and wise use of our environmental resources is work that is in demand today and will continue to be needed in the future.

Three steps to becoming a landscape architect: education, internship/ experience and examination

Landscape architects must hold a professional degree in architecture from one of the 69 schools of landscape architecture that have degree programs accredited by the Landscape Architectural Accreditation Board (LAAB).

All states require individuals to be licensed (registered) before they may call themselves a Professional Landscape Architect (PLA) and contract to provide landscape architectural services. During the time between graduation and becoming licensed, landscape architecture school

graduates must gain three years of professional experience in a landscape architecture firm under the supervision of a licensed landscape architect. After they complete the required years of experience, they must take and pass the Landscape Architect Registration Exam (LARE). The exam is broken into four sections consisting of multiple choice and graphical questions.

After receiving a license, all landscape architects must complete a required amount of continuing education throughout their career in order to maintain their license. The number of hours a year depends on the state in which they are licensed.

How do I prepare in high school to be a landscape architect?

While still in high school, you should plan a strong college preparatory program of courses in English, history, and other humanities subjects such as social studies, psychology, theater and communications/public speaking, which will sharpen your communication skills. Courses in mathematics, including geometry, trigonometry, algebra and physics, will help develop problem-solving techniques. Science courses such as biology, ecology and geology will give you a base knowledge of Earth sciences to build on.

Art courses — drawing, painting, sculpture, or photography — will be helpful in developing your ability to visualize, conceptualize and think creatively, which are important skills in design.

Courses in computers, 3D modeling and business will be extremely helpful in preparing for a career in landscape architecture. Develop positive skills to use your entire life. Learn how to manage your time and get projects done well and promptly. Project management is a huge responsibility in any design professional's office.

A well-rounded education is essential for success as a landscape architect, and it is just another emphasis that every course is important.

Check out these websites for more information

Landscape Architecture Overview:
www.asla.org/design/index.html

Prairie Gateway Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects: www.pgasla.org

American Society of Landscape Architects: www.asla.org

Your Path to Landscape Architecture:
www.asla.org/yourpath/index.html

Colleges with a Landscape Architecture Program:
www.asla.org/schools.aspx

Council of Landscape Architectural Registration Boards (CLARB): www.clarb.org

Begin your career exploration by considering these ideas:

Discover architecture.

It is diverse and has many opportunities for specialization—become familiar with the options.

Be interested

In the design of the built environment, including public space, and how people use it. Volunteer for organizations such as your local nature center or Parks & Rec. Department.

Ask questions.

Most big cities have a local ASLA Chapter (American Society of Landscape Architects). They are a great resource and are happy to help you learn more about landscape architecture and give you information about careers. Talk with landscape architects; observe landscape projects and construction sites; visit landscape architecture firms and schools and speak with landscape architecture students.

Prepare for professional education.

Develop a broad interest in the arts and humanities and a solid background in environmental sciences and math. Consider taking Advanced Placement courses while in high school.

Learn communication skills.

Writing effectively, speaking clearly, and developing freehand drawing skills are essential to pursuing a career in landscape architecture.

Read.

Books and magazines on landscape architecture and design, and browse the web for landscape architecture design websites and blogs.