



Economic Impact Analysis Virginia Department of Planning and Budget

18 VAC 10-20: Board for Architects, Professional Engineers, Land Surveyors, Certified Interior Designers and Landscape Architects, Rules and Regulations Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation February 25, 2004

The Department of Planning and Budget (DPB) has analyzed the economic impact of this proposed regulation in accordance with Section 2.2-4007.G of the Administrative Process Act and Executive Order Number 21 (02). Section 2.2-4007.G requires that such economic impact analyses include, but need not be limited to, the projected number of businesses or other entities to whom the regulation would apply, the identity of any localities and types of businesses or other entities particularly affected, the projected number of persons and employment positions to be affected, the projected costs to affected businesses or entities to implement or comply with the regulation, and the impact on the use and value of private property. The analysis presented below represents DPB's best estimate of these economic impacts.

Summary of the Proposed Regulation

The Board for Architects, Professional Engineers, Land Surveyors, Certified Interior Designers and Landscape Architects (board) proposes to require that for future applicants with a degree in landscape architecture to become certified landscape architects, they must obtain at least 12 months of experience/training under the direct control and personal supervision of a licensed or certified landscape architect, and either another 24 months of experience/training under the direct control and personal supervision of a licensed or certified landscape architect, or 48 months of experience/training under the direct control and personal supervision of a licensed architect, professional engineer, or land surveyor.

Estimated Economic Impact

Description of Landscape Architecture

According to the American Society of Landscape Architects:¹

Landscape architecture encompasses the analysis, planning, design, management, and stewardship of the natural and built environments. Types of projects include: residential; parks and recreation; monuments; urban design; streetscapes and public spaces; transportation corridors and facilities; gardens and arboreta; security design; hospitality and resorts; institutional; academic campuses; therapeutic gardens; historic preservation and restoration; reclamation; conservation; corporate and commercial; landscape art and earth sculpture; interior landscapes; and more.

Risks Associated with Landscape Architecture

In a report prepared for The American Society of Landscape Architects, Schatz (2003)² points out that “Landscape architects are responsible for decisions that affect the condition of vital infrastructure, rights-of-way, and significant private and public site development. When performed by negligent, incompetent, or unethical practitioners, landscape architecture has the potential to cause serious personal injuries. Poor landscape architecture practices can seriously impair the value and use of property.” Schatz provides several examples of physical injury and property damage due to incompetent landscape architecture work, such as: a homeowner who was electrocuted while adjusting a landscape light, playground injuries, pedestrian injuries due to grading defects in streetscapes, collapsing walls due to inadequate drainage, etc.

Board Proposal

In order to become a certified landscape architect under the current regulations, individuals must pay an application fee, pass an examination prepared by the Council of Landscape Architectural Registration Boards (CLARB) and either have graduated from an accredited landscape architecture program or have had eight years of combined applicable

¹ Source: www.asla.org on February 24, 2005.

² Schatz, Alex P., “Regulation of Landscape Architecture and the Protection of Public Health, Safety, and Welfare,” produced for The American Society of Landscape Architects, October 2003.

education and experience. For individuals who have graduated from an accredited landscape architecture program, the board proposes to require the following additional requirements: 1) at least 12 months of experience/training under the direct control and personal supervision of a licensed or certified landscape architect, and 2) either another 24 months of experience/training under the direct control and personal supervision of a licensed or certified landscape architect, or 48 months of experience/training under the direct control and personal supervision of a licensed architect, professional engineer, or land surveyor.

Costs and Benefits

The proposed new requirements are burdensome for individuals who have graduated from an accredited program and have passed the qualifying examination, but who would not have otherwise chosen to work for other certified individuals for three years. Such persons may prefer to start their own business or work in other circumstances that could pay a higher salary or be located closer to their preferred location.

The benefits of the proposed new requirements are uncertain. While poorly done landscape architecture work can produce substantial risks to the public, it is not clear whether the board's proposed additional requirements will significantly reduce those risks. Earning a degree from an accredited institution and passing the qualifying examination both provide evidence of knowledge and skill associated with landscape architecture. A talented individual who has earned a landscape architecture degree and passed the CLARB exam may be better acquainted with the latest developments in the science of landscape architecture than a certified landscape architect who has not been closely following progress in relevant knowledge and procedures. Mandating that the aforementioned talented individual work for someone who may be less knowledgeable concerning important developments may provide little benefit.

Studies of other professions have cast doubt on whether those with greater experience and more time passed since the professional degree was earned are more competent than more recent graduates with less experience. For example, in a recent article in *Annals of Internal Medicine*, Choudry et al (2005)³ found that of 62 published studies that measured either physician knowledge or quality of care, and described time since medical school graduation or

age, more than half suggested that physician performance declined over time for all outcomes measured. Only one study showed improved performance for all outcomes measured. What is true for physicians may not necessarily be true for landscape architects, but this evidence does provide some reasonable doubt as to whether greater experience correlates with greater competence in landscape architecture. Hence, we cannot say with confidence that requiring individuals who have earned a landscape architecture degree and passed the CLARB to work for at least three years for other certified individuals will significantly reduce the incidence of incompetent work.

Certification is only required for professionals to list or advertise themselves as a “certified landscape architect” or a “landscape architect.” Professionals do not need to become certified to provide and sell landscape architectural services in Virginia. Instead they can, for example, call themselves landscape designers and provide and sell all of the same services. Those individuals who would not have pursued employment in the manner proposed to be required for certification will need to decide if the use of the title is important enough for them to change their work plans. It seems likely that at least some such individuals will choose instead to forego certification. Others will choose to alter their work plans and seek employment in a firm with certified landscape architects. This would represent an increase in supply of individuals seeking to supply their labor services to firms that already have certified landscape architects. An increased supply in workers would likely reduce the market salary those workers earn, everything else being equal.

The new proposed requirements will likely increase the cost for consumers to purchase the services of professionals with the title of certified landscape architect in Virginia. The proposal makes it more costly to obtain certification. As discussed above, the extra cost will raise the cost of entering the profession and, hence, fewer individuals will seek certification. Fewer certified individuals means that the supply of certified landscape architects will be smaller. Holding demand constant, a smaller supply will create higher market prices for these services.

³ Choudry, Niteesh K.; Fletcher, Robert H., and Stephen B. Soumerai, “Systematic Review: The Relationship between Clinical Experience and Quality of Health Care,” *Annals of Internal Medicine*: Volume 142, Number 4, February 15, 2005.

Businesses and Entities Affected

The proposed regulations affect landscape architects, architects, professional engineers, and land surveyors, as well as their clients. According to the Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation, approximately 12 individuals seek landscape architect certification each year.

Localities Particularly Affected

The proposed regulations affect localities throughout the Commonwealth.

Projected Impact on Employment

The proposal to require that in order to become a certified landscape architect, applicants with a degree in landscape architecture must obtain at least 12 months of experience/training under the direct control and personal supervision of a licensed or certified landscape architect and either another 24 months of experience/training under the direct control and personal supervision of a licensed or certified landscape architect, or 48 months of experience/training under the direct control and personal supervision of a licensed architect, professional engineer, or land surveyor, may encourage some landscape architects to pursue such employment opportunities who would have otherwise started their own business or work for an employer who does meet those descriptions.

Effects on the Use and Value of Private Property

Firms with licensed or certified landscape architects, architects, professional engineers, or land surveyors may find the supply of landscape architects willing to work for them to be increased due to the proposed new requirement for landscape architecture certification. An increased supply in workers would likely reduce the market salary those workers earn, everything else being equal. Those firms will therefore have their value increased. Also, since the proposed new requirement for landscape architecture certification will likely discourage some individuals from pursuing the certification, the total market supply of services offered by certified landscape architects will likely decrease. When the supply of offered services is reduced, consumers pay higher market prices to obtain those services. Thus, the value of certified landscape architecture firms will increase with the resulting increased market prices.

Individuals who would have started their own business or chosen other work arrangements, but instead work for other certified individuals due to the proposed requirements, may have reduced incomes.

References

Choudry, Niteesh K.; Fletcher, Robert H., and Stephen B. Soumerai, “Systematic Review: The

Relationship between Clinical Experience and Quality of Health Care,” *Annals of*

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Safety, and Welfare,” produced for The American Society of Landscape Architects,

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