

DECORATING & DESIGN

APR 4, 2025

HOW MUCH DOES HIRING AN INTERIOR DESIGNER COST?

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*Photo by Mohammad Lotfian/Unsplash*

This is how interior designers come up with a final budget.

Whether you just bought a fixer-upper, are tired of your outdated kitchen, or are starting from scratch with a custom-build, there are plenty of reasons why you might be thinking about bringing in a helping hand to guide your reno. An interior designer can take your wildest design dreams and turn them into a reality.

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Interior designers act as the liaison between the contractor, builders, and client—and even between the clients themselves. “When you hire the right designer, you get a return on your investment,” says Maria DeCotiis, an **interior designer and stylist** in Vancouver, B.C.

But behind the curtain of awe-inspiring finishes and luxurious materials, what does this investment actually look like when it comes down to the dollars and cents?

We spoke to DeCotiis for a breakdown of how interior designers lay out a budget, different price structures, and how much it's all going to cost.

HOW DO DESIGNERS COME UP WITH A BUDGET?

An interior design budget consists of two cost projections: design fees and the project budget.

Design fees are based on how intensive a project will be for the designer. This is dependent on the inclusion of drawings, construction designs, and how intricate the design is. In other words, the more time and work involved, the higher your design fees will be.

"It's also partially client-driven," says DeCotiis. "If a client wants to be involved, you have to make sure you're budgeting in time for them."

The other piece of your budget has to do with the project itself.

"We start out really high-level with the budget," says DeCotiis. A combination of past projects, the relationship to the contractor, **overall floor plan**, furniture, and, of course, the general scope of the project all inform how much it's going to cost.

Once the design is final, the designer can present the complete budget to the client. "The more we check in and break it down along the way, the easier it is to get a better result for everyone," says DeCotiis.

HOW DESIGNERS CHARGE FOR A PROJECT

There are a number of different price structures that designers may use that will affect how much a project ends up costing. Generally, DeCotiis says that the structure applied depends on the type of project.

HOURLY

As the name suggests, the designer is paid by the hour on this type of payment plan. "The beauty with hourly is that the client has some freedom," says DeCotiis.

Say you hired a designer to renovate your kitchen. If you decide halfway through the project that you also want to **update your powder room**, it's easy for the designer to tack that on without redoing the entire contract.

That said, hourly doesn't necessarily equal cheaper. Designers do a lot of work behind the scenes, and a less experienced one may require extra time. On the flip side, an experienced designer charges more for their hourly rate.

FLAT FEE

With a flat fee, the client knows exactly what to expect from the beginning. Many designers, including DeCotiis, charge 50 percent of the fee at the start of the project then receive the rest upon completion.

A flat fee typically works best for a larger renovation with a clear design scope.

HYBRID

For some projects, a combination of hourly and flat fees are the way to go. A designer might charge a flat fee for design concepts up until presentation. When construction or installations start, then it may switch to hourly.

HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO HIRE AN INTERIOR DESIGNER?

Unfortunately, there isn't a one-size-fits-all answer to this question. While some design firms have minimum fees, explains DeCotiis, it ultimately depends on the scope of the project and the designer's experience.

In Canada, designers charge anywhere from \$150 to \$600 per hour. A new-build could run you upwards of \$500 per square-foot, while a simple living room renovation might have a more flexible budget.

"Interior design is a luxury service," she says. "It's helpful to understand what the value of what you're doing is."

Whether that's the value of your own time—and let's face it, sanity—or resale value down the line. "Instead of looking at the cost of the designer, look at what you're saving," she says.

RECOMMENDED



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BY: SARA ROMANO

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