



# Contractor Comparison Guide

## A Guide to Navigating the Contractor Interview

When it comes to evaluating a contractor to install your stone project, it is important to ask the right questions. While the process can be quite daunting, we have made it much easier for you to identify questions that are important to any successful stone installation. These questions will allow you to make a fair comparison between your contractor options and assist you in choosing the right one for your particular needs.

To get you started on your way, we have compiled a list of questions to consider for paver or wall projects. We have saved you some time by answering these questions about Elegant Estates.

| Questions About The Company In The Initial Interview                                       | Elegant Estates  | Contractor B | Contractor C |
|--|--|--------------|--------------|
| How long have you been in business?  | Since 1999   |              |              |
| Are you fully insured?   | <b>Yes</b> - we provide all insurances required for each state we work in. We are happy to provide certificates upon request   |              |              |
| Can you provide me with a reference list that is similiar to the project I want installed? | <b>Yes</b> - we have installed many projects. We get contracted for jobs that range from the simplest to the very complicated. It is highly likely that we have projects that have similiar components to yours. However, we extend the courtesy to our past clients of calling them first to verify that they are okay with answering your questions. |              |              |
| Will you provide me a design of my project?  | <b>Yes</b> - We prefer having a design to install from. That said, some smaller projects do not require a design or do not justify the costs associated with such a plan rendering.  |              |              |
| What happens if the design is not something that I like?                                   | We have a process from the first interview that allows us to get very close to your desired end result on the first attempt. Our design charge allows for 2 revisions. Any additional changes from there may result in additional charges.   |              |              |
| Once started, will you commit to staying on my job until it is complete?                   | <b>Yes</b> - Once we mobilize our equipment, we stay committed to the completion of your job before starting another installation project. That said, weather and supplier delays may force minor, temporary changes to our schedule.  |              |              |

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| Will you provide me a 3D rendering of my project or a video walk-through? | <b>Yes</b> - Design fees may apply. We supply a variety of design options that can include Plan Views, Dimensional Drawings, 3D Renderings, Walk-Through Videos, and a Virtual Reality Experience.   |  |  |
| How do I get my design?   | Once payment is made (if applicable), we supply you with a link to a google drive folder where we can then collaborate on the design. This gives you the ability to save the information digitally or print it if so desired.  |  |  |
| What is the payment structure for projects?                               | We typically collect half of the project cost as a down payment for ordering materials and getting the project started. The remainder will either be collected as a lump sum at the end of the project or as progress payments as certain milestones are reached.  |  |  |
| Who do I call if I have a question, and are you accessible?               | We have a number on all of our quotes that rings the office. If there is no one at the office, or the lines are busy, your call is routed to the field. During our high volume work season, it may take 12-24 hours for us to return general inquiries. We are happy provide you will a cell number to contact directly with questions regarding your particular installation. This ensures quick access for pressing inquiries. |  |  |
| Do you have a way to view sample materials?                               | <b>Yes</b> - By designing via Virtual Reality (VR), you can experience your project as if it was already built in your backyard. You can get an incredible sense of scale, detail, and scope. For those not experiencing VR, we can order in samples for you to look at. This can delay your start date, however.  |  |  |

| Questions About The Paperwork & Contract Stage                             | Elegant Estates | Contractor B | Contractor C |
|--|-----------------|--------------|--------------|
| I fully understand the design presented to me                              | YES / NO        | YES / NO     | YES / NO     |
| I feel that the design meets our needs and addresses concerns of mine      | YES / NO        | YES / NO     | YES / NO     |
| Communication with the contractor was timely                               | YES / NO        | YES / NO     | YES / NO     |
| Did the contractor address my questions and listen to my needs?            | YES / NO        | YES / NO     | YES / NO     |
| Has my contractor been certified in the industry (By either NCMA or ICPI)? | YES / NO        | YES / NO     | YES / NO     |

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| Does the contract lay out specific details about what will be done in the project (i.e - How can I ensure that I am going to get what I pay for?) | YES / NO | YES / NO | YES / NO |
| Do I have a general sense that I can trust this contractor?   | YES / NO | YES / NO | YES / NO |

| Questions About Paver Installation Standards    | Elegant Estates   | Contractor B | Contractor C |
|---|---|--------------|--------------|
| Are you ICPI Certified?                         | <b>Yes</b> - We meet or exceed all of the recommended ICPI construction standards. We always strive to have an ICPI lead person on site at all times. We have achieved ICPI accreditation for both standard and permeable pavers.   |              |              |
| How do you know what utilities are underground? | We are a registered business with UFPO, and will contact them to markout all public utilities that are present in the proposed project area prior to the start of the job.  |              |              |
| What do you use for base material?              | We use a crushed stone of a specific gradation. This is one of the most important parts of your project. Since each site calls for a different material, we specify this type in your proposal.                                     |              |              |
| Do you use stone dust?                          | <b>No</b> - Stone dust does not meet ICPI or NCMA standards. It <b>WILL</b> cause your project to fail if used.   |              |              |
| How deep do you excavate?                       | This is relative to the type of paver and function. For permeable pavers we excavate to a minimum depth of 12" while standard pavers only requires 9". Most times we excavate deeper but this is specified in your proposal.        |              |              |
| Do you use geotextile?                          | <b>Yes</b> - Again, the type depends on the paver. For permeable pavers we install a non-woven geotextile. For standard pavers we use a 500x woven geotextile. This helps to prevent migration of base materials into the subsoils. |              |              |
| Do you use edge restraints?                     | <b>Yes</b> - Edge restraints are a vital component of a successful project. We use curbing, poured concrete, or spiked poly edging depending on your requirements. This is spelled out in your proposal.                            |              |              |

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| How do you compact the base material?                  | Depending on the paver type, we use a multitude of plate compactors for each different stage of the process. Depending on the base, we may need to access a water source in order to achieve adequate compaction.                   |  |  |
| When cutting, does it get dusty?                       | We employ various strategies to control any harmful dust caused by cutting. These methods include both HEPA vacuums and water slurry technology.  |  |  |
| What do you install in the paver joints?               | We install a polymeric sand in standard paver joints. This is the only material recommended for this task. For permeable pavers, we install a #9 gradation gravel.  |  |  |
| Do you offer a warranty?                               | <b>Yes</b> - We offer an industry best 5 year installation warranty and many of our manufacturers offer lifetime product warranties.  |  |  |
| Does your estimate include site repair and patch work? | <b>Yes</b> - We itemize as much as we can on the proposal so you have the flexibility of choosing whether you wish to have this service completed. This is handy for budget conscious customers who may wish to do this themselves. |  |  |

| Questions About Retaining Wall Installation Standards | Elegant Estates   | Contractor B | Contractor C |
|---|---|--------------|--------------|
| Are you NCMA Certified?                               | <b>Yes</b> - We meet or exceed all of the recommended NCMA construction standards.  |              |              |
| What do you use for base materials?                   | It depends of the type of wall. We typically use a #2 angular, crushed stone.   |              |              |
| Do you use stone dust?                                | <b>No</b> - Stone dust does not meet NCMA standards. It <b>WILL</b> cause your project to fail if used.   |              |              |
| How deep do you excavate?                             | We typically excavate deep enough to accomodate embedding 10% of the height of the wall plus a minimum of 8-12" for the compacted base material. Whenever an engineered plan is supplied, we defer to their specifications. |              |              |
| Is there drainage behind my wall?                     | <b>Yes</b> - We install a 4" drain pipe on all walls that require drainage. This is surrounded with typically 3' of clean drainage stone behind the wall.   |              |              |

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| How will you backfill my wall?                         | We backfill with a clean column of #2 stone at 3' deep and approximately 3/4 of the height of the wall. This provides the necessary environment for drainage and proper reinforcement.  |  |  |
| How is the wall finished off?                          | We will adhere a capstone to the top of the wall and will break or cut the exposed ends of the block to provide a professional appearance.  |  |  |
| Does my wall need to be engineered?                    | As of the publication date of this guide, NY requires any wall 4' or greater in height be engineered. We also suggest that anything that will be supporting any type of load atop the wall be engineered as well. This will greatly reduce the homeowner liability should the wall fail.                                    |  |  |
| Do I need geogrid behind my wall?                      | Possibly. Most retaining walls require a geogrid reinforcement. This depends on the type of stone being used for the wall as well as environmental conditions like soil type, hydrological forces, and load requirements. We generally include a bi-directional grid as an "insurance policy" even if it is "not required". |  |  |
| Do you offer a warranty?                               | <b>Yes</b> - We offer an industry best 5 year installation warranty and many of our manufacturers offer lifetime product warranties.  |  |  |
| Does your estimate include site repair and patch work? | <b>Yes</b> - We itemize as much as we can on the proposal so you have the flexibility of choosing whether you wish to have this service completed. This is handy for budget conscious customers who may wish to do this themselves.   |  |  |

| Questions About Work Site And Crews           | Elegant Estates   | Contractor B | Contractor C |
|---|---|--------------|--------------|
| Are your workers in well kept uniforms?       | <b>Yes</b> - You will recognize our crews by their highly visible safety apparel. As with any other outdoor service, it is likely that we will show up clean, and leave dirty!                    |              |              |
| Will we know who our project point person is? | <b>Yes</b> - Upon signing your contract we will give you a phone number to access a point of contact. You will also be introduced to the lead person on the job when the project first commences. |              |              |

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| Are your workers friendly and respectful?                    | <b>Yes</b> - We put great emphasis on our crews showing respect to you and your property. We vet our staff for personality first and you will likely find yourself making a friend or two while we install your job. You may even be a bit sad when we leave!                                      |  |  |
| Is the site kept as neat and organized as possible?          | <b>Yes</b> - We strive to keep your jobsite clean and efficient. On larger jobs, however, there can be so much material being installed that it can be classified as "organized chaos". This usually is on the front end of the project and quickly becomes rectified as the material is consumed. |  |  |
| Is there an owner/manager or foreman working on my job site? | <b>Yes</b> - We will always have a Manager or Foreman present on the jobsite that is briefed on the job requirements.  |  |  |

| Additional Notes | Elegant Estates | Contractor B | Contractor C |
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