

# HOME REMODELING

From Inspiration to Reality

An early home planners guide.



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## Introduction

Remodeling can be a stressful time for homeowners that ranks right up there with moving or selling your home. Without proper planning, there can be unexpected changes that cause delays as well as additional costs. The value and enjoyment from your well thought out and finished project is worth some upfront challenges, especially knowing that you will have the home of your dreams.

To provide you knowledge and education during this important time of your life, we created this comprehensive guide to help you through the process. This document comes from our decades of experience as a design, build, remodeling firm and will help you avoid the pitfalls that many inexperienced homeowners face when going through a home remodel.

# Clarify Your Intentions

Before you start any major remodeling project, make sure you have a clear understanding of your desired outcome. What is the reason for this remodel? What are the most important things you want to accomplish?

## Most home remodeling projects fit into these categories:

- Long term maintenance and repairs.
- Improve energy efficiency and comfort.
- Adding space and/or better use of existing space.
- Increase the value of your investment for resale by updating.
- Personalize your home to fit lifestyle.

**PRO TIP** Homeowners often assume they need to add-on when the space they have isn't working. A less expensive option is to identify and fix problems with your existing house before doing a room addition.

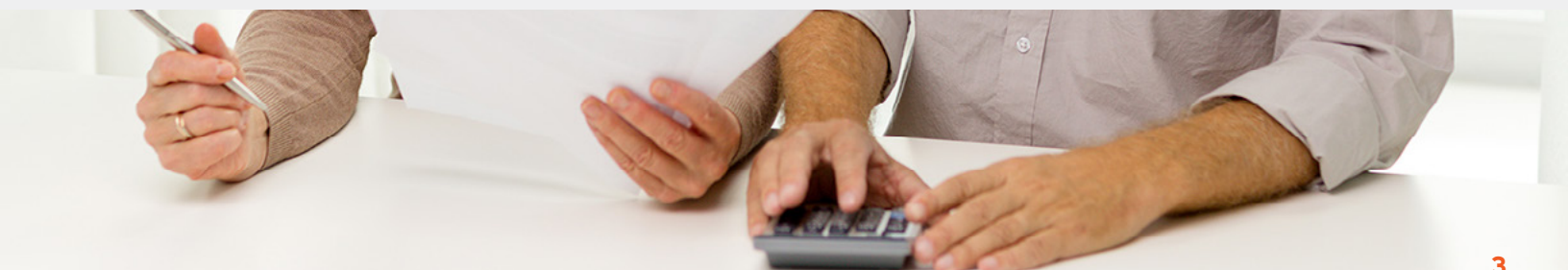


# Determine Your Budget

Be clear from the start what the appropriate amount to invest into your remodeling project is. Can you accomplish what you desire within that budget? Consider the current value of your home and the after value when the improvements are completed based on comps in your area. If the project would bring your property in line with the value with other houses in your neighborhood, the remodel is probably a good option. If your remodeling project would make your home by far the most expensive, consider how long you plan to

live there, the value of a better quality of life and then decide if it is worth a little over spending. With a realistic budget you can have an honest conversation with your contractor about what's possible.

**PRO TIP** It's a good idea to build a little contingency in your budget for upgrades you may desire. Depending on the size of your project, we recommend 5 – 10%.





# Choosing The Right Contractor

Homeowners undertaking remodeling projects deserve high quality work completed on time and budget. An experienced design - build firm not only will make the process easy for you, they will improve your quality of living, and at the same time increase the value of your home.

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## Here are some valuable tips to help you make an informed decision when you chose a contractor to remodel your home and deliver the best value.

- Start by checking all reviews of the companies you are considering online at sites like [www.cslb.ca.gov](http://www.cslb.ca.gov) and [www.bbb.org](http://www.bbb.org). In addition, do a Google search for each company followed by "reviews" to see what other understand what other consumers have said.

- Only consider contractors who are licensed, bonded and insured. In the state of California, contractors are not required to maintain general liability insurance. Choosing a company who cannot provide you with proof of general liability and worker's compensation insurance puts you, the homeowner in serious risk if a worker gets injured or causes damages to your property. Other considerations are longevity, community involvement, and staff experience. It also good to know if you are working with a family business.

- Everything should be in writing starting with a "scope of work", which is the narrative part of the contract. The plans, home improvement contract including start/completion time and scope of work document make up the entire agreement. If the scope of work is written clearly and concisely, with no gray areas, there should be no misunderstandings.

- Take a visit to one of their current job sites. This will allow you to see how they work, and understand how they organize their work sites.

- Does the company offer design - build services and do they have a licensed architect on staff? It's beneficial that one firm see the design through to completion, and makes it easier to find 1 reliable partner versus doing it multiple times.

- Do they have numerous work samples that match your project and style?

- Part of the contracting process should include you approving the construction plans. Make sure you fully understand what is on the plan and what is excluded before signing off.

- If there are contract allowances, go out shopping to confirm the amounts are sufficient to purchase the caliber of fixtures and

finishes you desire. A contractor or interior designer should not decide for you.

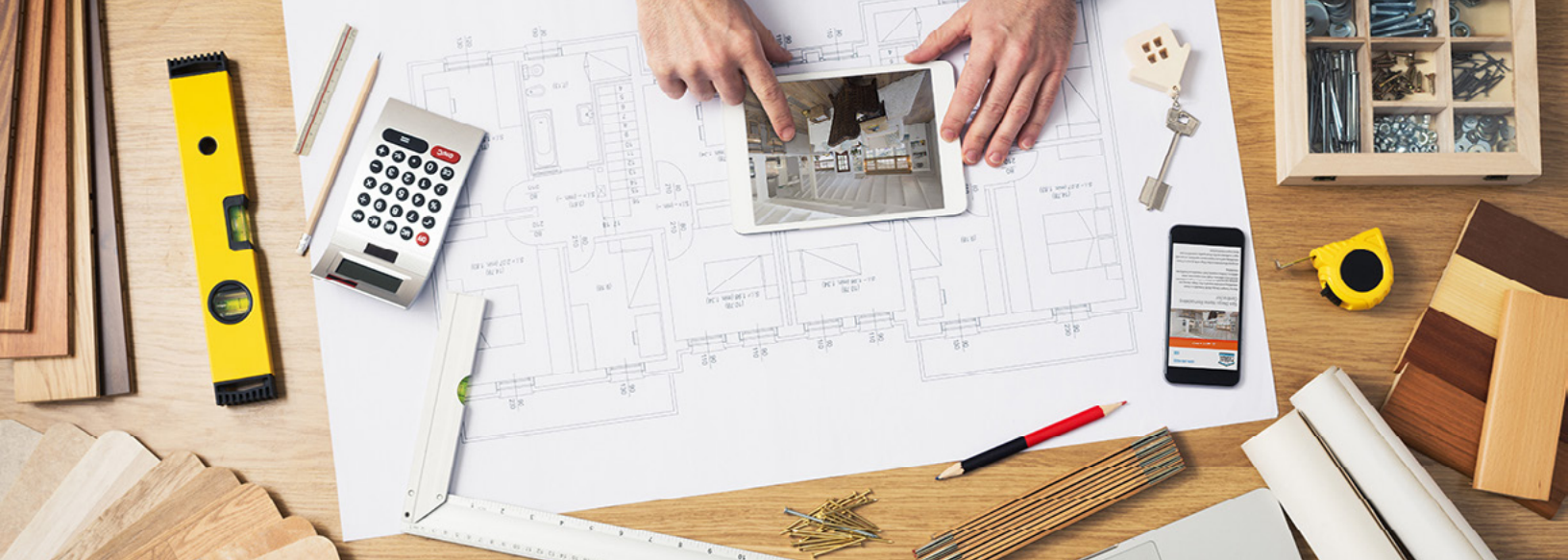
- By California State Law, the following documentation must be provided to you by the contractor when you enter into a property improvement: Home Improvement Contract, Notice to Owner form, Check Out Your Contractor form, California License Law Notice, Information About Commercial Liability form, Notice of Cancellation (2 copies)

- Most well established contractors would not ask for a down payment. By California State Law, a contractor is only allowed a 10% down payment or \$1,000, whichever is less.

- Check the payment schedule provided by your contractor to make sure there are milestones that require inspection tied to when you pay where possible. There should be a 5 - 10 percent retention held until final inspection is approved and all punch list items are completed.



*Remodeling is like a marriage in the sense it is a long term relationship. There will be a little give and take. Make sure you choose a company that you can work with for the long haul. The biggest companies may not give you the personal attention a medium sized company will. Also, the most expensive price may not always be the best, but the lowest price most likely is the worst choice.*



# Understand What Goes Into Pricing A Remodeling Project

There are many line items that go into pricing a home improvement project. Factors that impact the cost are location, size, scope, fixtures and finishes.

## Location

Geographic location impacts construction costs both structurally and in architectural design because of building style. For example, in California, there is seismic activity which dictates structural design as compared to Chicago where roofing systems must be built to withstand snow loads. Architecturally, stucco is less expensive than wood siding and composition shingle roofing is more economical than tile.

## Scope

The scope of each project is unique and based on the individual homeowner's needs and taste. Also, building a room addition on a concrete slab is more economical than on a raised wood floor, just like a single-story addition is less costly than a second-story addition. Production and tract homes versus custom homes differ in cost because of building type and caliber of materials.

## Size

The square footage of the addition or remodeled area directly impacts cost in many ways. Obviously with a larger area, more materials and labor are needed to complete the work. With that being said, there are economies of scale, so the cost per square foot typically goes down. Size can also impact structural requirements like footings and support beams.

## Finishes & Fixtures

Besides structural, finishes and fixtures are the largest contributor to cost. Line items like plumbing fixtures, appliances, flooring, hard surfaces (stone, granite etc.), cabinetry, and carpentry impact costs dramatically.

*The only way to accurately quote a project is to develop a design plan and scope. There are design-build contractors who offer free design and quotes. The old adage, you get what you pay for applies here. You should not rely on the accuracy or detail of a free design. It is well worth investing in developing an architectural plan and scope with a reputable firm. Part of the process is to offer a few different priced-out design schemes and help you meld them into one that you will love. In the long run, this will help eliminate potential cost overruns and ensure your project runs smoothly during construction.*

# Keep Your Sanity During The Remodel

Now that you have a contractor selected, your project is properly designed, the scope is established and the permits are secured, it's time to begin the remodel.

**To prepare yourself mentally during the construction, here are some tips:**

## Know your boundaries

Depending on the scope of your project and how much of your existing home is being disturbed, you may not need to move out. If you plan on staying, be prepared for a little camping. Your contractor should be responsible for keeping you and your family including pets safe during construction and let you know when vacating is the only option. It may mean areas of your home are sectioned off and not accessible. In most cases, it is faster and more cost effective on the construction side if you move out. You are the only one who can decide if a little inconvenience is worth saving the moving and short term rental costs.

## Pardon our dust

Even with temporary walls and sealing off construction areas, your home will be dusty no matter how much you clean. This is a small inconvenience in the scheme of things when you consider what the outcome will be.

## Take a vacation

If you can leave your home for even part of the remodeling, especially during demolition, it may be a great time to visit family or friends, or cash in those hotel points you have been stashing away. Even if you can only get away for a day or two (and your project is months long), it will give you a break and allow you to rejuvenate for the stretch run of your remodeling project.

## Think long term

When the dust, noise and being displaced gets on your nerves, just think of the finished product. Remodeling is just a short period of time in what will be a long relationship with your new and improved home.



*The good outweighs the bad when it comes to improving your home, but sometimes it can be tough to see the light at the end of the tunnel when saws are humming, hammers are banging, and dust is flying. Realize that the temporary inconvenience will lead to long-term happiness, and add value to your home. Looking at the bigger picture will help you cope with the irritation of remodeling and keep you focused on what really matters: a wonderful home for your family.*

## After a Project

Many of the products you buy and the work performed may come with warranties and servicing timeframes, be sure to understand not only what is offered but what is required of you to ensure you receive the full benefit. Many times with appliances and hard materials, warranties require that you complete a registration of your product within a certain time period in order to receive the full warranty program and benefits. Your home improvement professional should provide all the manuals, documentation and warranties.

Undertaking any remodeling project can seem daunting, but with proper planning and reliable partners, your project should be a fun and enjoyable experience leaving you with your dream home for you, your friends, and family to enjoy for many generations.

We wish you the best of luck with your projects and know that when done right the experience will be a positive and lasting memory of something you saw from vision all the way through to a finished product, leaving a lasting feeling of accomplishment.



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