

## 6 STEPS TO PLANNING A SUCCESSFUL BUILD/RENOVATION

Here are six crucial steps to help you plan for a successful home renovation or new build, and the reasons they're so important for any project.

**1. CHOOSE DESIGN PROFESSIONALS.** To create a plan and detailed scope of work, most homeowners hire an architect & interior designer. Many designers work on projects that don't involve major structural work or additions, and offer assistance with material and color selections for both interior and exterior

Architects may take on a wide range of work, or work only on floor plans and permits, and leave the details of the electrical plan, baths and kitchen to the designer.

Selecting a design professional usually starts with an in-person meeting, which can take a few weeks depending on how many companies you are interviewing. This is your opportunity to understand the services that each firm offers and make sure they match up with what you are expecting. It's also critical that you have a budget for your project in mind that you communicate clearly to the firm you hire, so the design can align with what you are planning to invest.

**2. CREATE A PLAN.** After choosing an architect and designer it's time to start making a plan and get to the FUN stuff and wish lists and get these to your architect to start designing.

**3. INTERVIEW CONTRACTORS.** Contractors are frequently brought into the process once a final schematic design has been selected. Usually there is at least a general idea of how the home will look from the outside, a dimensioned floor plan and some preliminary material selections. With this much information, it's possible to provide preliminary estimates of cost.

Contractors are often asked to estimate the schematic design as part of the interview process. It may take a couple of weeks to set up the interviews and generally at least two to three weeks after interviews to receive the estimates. Altogether it could take four to six weeks to interview candidates and receive estimates. After that you may want to call references, visit jobsites or do additional research before making a decision about the contractor you will hire.

**4. GO SHOPPING WHILE OTHERS ARE ENGINEERING.** Love to shop or hate to shop? This is where the skill of your designer to help with your material selections. Even those who like to shop may be overwhelmed by all the options and want professional input. Do not underestimate the number of things that need to be selected, from doorknobs and windows to countertops and light fixtures. To really keep a handle on your project cost, it's best to select many things ahead of construction. This will allow your contractor to tell you the prices for what you'd like and properly schedule material purchases based on lead times.

Allow yourself one to two months to choose everything. While you are shopping for tile and hardwood floors, your architect or designer will finalize construction drawings, work with a structural engineer on how the project will be built and put in the details required for permitting. If it all goes well, you will work on this step and the previous one concurrently and finish at the same time.

**5. GET YOUR PERMITS.** Depending on the scope of your project and where it's located, permitting can take a days or MONTHS. You should have some idea ahead of filing for permits about the length of the process, which will allow you to identify a likely start date for your project. Permit fees can range from a few hundred dollars to thousands of dollars, depending on where you live and how big your project is.

**6. READY, SET ...** With the plan submitted for permits and material selections made, your contractor will be able to finish up pricing and write up a contract for construction. If the selected materials cost more than the budget allows, there may be a round of "value engineering," which means changing scope of work or materials to reduce cost. By the time the contract is signed, your contractor and designer will have identified the longer-lead items (like cabinets, windows, doors, tile and sometimes plumbing or electrical fixtures) and may even have them on order ahead of the start of construction, depending on the timing of your project.

By the time all of these steps are complete, it may be four to six months or even more since you started talking with design professionals.

The planning process can be lengthy, but each step you take will put you closer to starting your project with a clear vision of what's to come. That investment of time on the front end means your entire construction team — design professional, contractor and you — can start the project on the same page with a clearly articulated plan. That makes it much easier say, "Go!" without any hesitation.