



# PLANNING THE PERFECT RENOVATION



**R**enovating a home is much more than upgrading rooms, constructing home additions, or retiling a kitchen. Renovating a home is planning for the future, investing in home value, and increasing your quality of life. However, planning the perfect renovation requires just that — well-executed planning. Planning the perfect renovation means asking the right questions to find the perfect contractor and asking yourself the right questions to know if the time is right to remodel.

To find the right contractor, you must first assess the contractor's upfront professionalism, ability to communicate, price, reputation, and credentials. Trusting your contractor and having open communication with them will ultimately decide the success or headache of your renovation project. To evaluate your potential contractor, **the following are essential questions that any homeowner should ask.**

## 1 Is your contractor's bid an estimate or a fixed price?

Some contractors offer bids as estimates, meaning your renovation bills could wind up being higher in the end. The contractor's reasoning for estimates versus a fixed price is typically due to unforeseen costs. Instead, be sure to request a fixed price by eliminating the unknown. For example, allow the contractor to open up a wall or examine a crawl space. Offer any upfront assistance to the contractor to help eliminate the potential of unforeseen building costs.

## 2 Who are your contractor's main suppliers?

Most contractors have long networking relationships with their building suppliers. Research your contractor's reliability and level of quality by talking to proprietors of local building supply stores. These may include tile shops, kitchen and bath showrooms, lumber yards, or the pro desk at the local home improvement center.

By doing so, you'll gain valuable insight on the relationship that your potential contractor has with the local home improvement industry. Remember, your contractor should have no problem telling you where his company buys their supplies, especially if they are in good standing within the community.

## 3 How long has your contractor been in business?

Surviving in today's competitive marketplace is an achievement in and of itself. Always search for a contractor with a long, established professional history within the community. Doing so should not be a problem as many successful contractors are proud of their achievements and successful past projects. It's also important to find out how many similar projects to yours that the contractor has completed in the last 12 months. This is an excellent indicator of your contractor's familiarity with the type of work required for your project. The more familiar your contractor is with your type of project, the less likely complications and delays will arise.



#### 4 Will I always have a contact person?

Open and reliable communication with the contractor is key when it comes to home renovations. If the supervisor is not available, it is important to be able to contact someone on the job whenever you may need to. Before the project begins, make sure to get exact names and contact information for all persons involved in the project. It is also important to know who will be on the job each day. Although this may vary a bit each day, most contractors work within a lead carpenter system. The lead carpenter is typically responsible for day-to-day supervision and an important contact person to know.

#### 5 What is the general timeframe of the project?

Once a contractor is selected, the next step is mapping out work schedules and timeframes. Important questions may include: What is your estimate for project completion? How early will your crew normally begin work? What time do they normally quit for the day? Will I be contacted about schedule changes? These questions outline completion dates and day-to-day workdays, and they ensure that you are always apprised about changes or delays in the schedule.

This also is a good time to discuss potential weather-related delays. Adverse conditions may postpone aspects of renovation. Discuss with your contractor these specific scenarios.

#### 6 Are there design services available?

If your renovation is a large or extensive project, you will most likely need architectural design assistance. Does your contractor have design-build capabilities? If not, you should consider hiring a company that has extensive design-build experience.

#### 7 Does your contractor assist with product and material selection?

Although contractors may aid you with product and material selection themselves, some will rely on various vendors to assist you with the decision-making process. As different vendors offer suggestions, no one is left in charge to oversee that different products and materials work harmoniously within the entire project. However, a licensed interior designer, who works with you throughout the process, will help ensure products and materials compliment the overall design of the renovation. If a contractor does not offer the services of a licensed interior designer as part of their design-build services, then you may require adding this service to your renovation budget.



## 8 Are your contractor's employees certified?

One of the best indicators of a company's industry knowledge, professionalism, and dedication include their employees' trade certifications. Remodelers are required to meet specific industry criteria to remain certified, and the National Association of the Remodeling Industry recognizes six designations: Certified Remodeler (CR), Certified Remodeler Specialist (CRS), Certified Lead Carpenter (CLC), Certified Remodeling Carpenter (CRC), Certified Remodeler Associate (CRA), Certified Kitchen & Bath Remodeler (CKBR), and Green Certified Professional (GCP). These professional designations often reflect a certain level of quality and dedication to craft.

## 9 Are permits required for the project?

Since most cities require permits for building projects, a failure to obtain the necessary permits or arrange inspections can be illegal. In a worst-case scenario, demolishing a project may be necessary if there is no way to comply with the law. It is vital to discuss all aspects of the permit process with your remodeling contractor before beginning the project.

## 10 How can we determine a specific schedule?

To determine specific milestones, it is important to have a schedule that outlines timeframes for tasks. This will provide a big-picture view of sequencing and offer more concrete deadlines for projects such as tile and countertops. For larger projects, a schedule of smaller tasks will also give you insight to overall project delays.

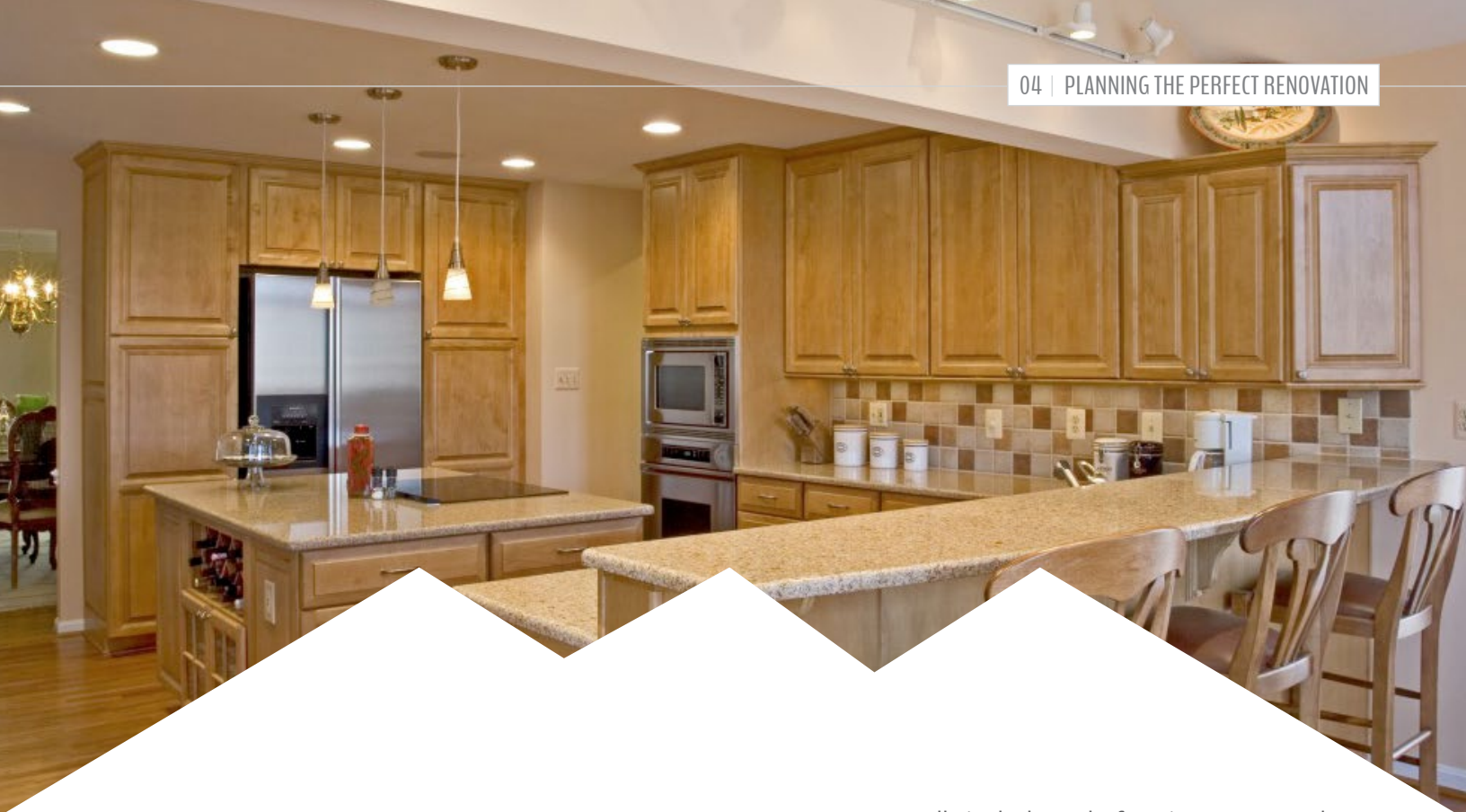
## 11 How will you protect my property?

Needless to say, this is a conversation that needs to take place before demolition. Topics like what dust containment measures can be taken and if any yard protection is offered are important details to discuss. Remember, in all likelihood, you'll still need your house to be livable while renovations take place.

## 12 How will you communicate with me?

Plan with your contractor the best way to communicate with you. Is there a cloud-based work schedule that you can follow? Is there a best time to call each day or each week for updates? For many, planning weekly meetings with their contractor at a specific time is an effective method to ask any questions face-to-face.





### 13 What kind of documentation will I receive when the project is done?

Discuss with your contractor any documentation you'd like to receive upon project completion. Although

contracts usually include end-of-project paperwork, such as lien releases, marked-up plans, and copies of inspection reports, there may be additional paperwork you will find valuable.

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Along with the important questions to ask your contractor, there are also important questions to consider yourself before beginning a renovation project. Being honest with yourself is crucial in making the decision to renovate your home.

#### 1 WHAT'S MY BUDGET?

You must realistically determine what you can afford and outline all the must-haves that you'd like to invest in. Also, you must prepare for any surprise costs that may arise and ensure you have extra money in the budget.

#### 2 WHAT'S MY AVAILABILITY?

You must be prepared for the time commitments it takes for checking in face-to-face, outlining a schedule, going to weekly meetings, and finding the right contractor.



**3 AM I READY FOR A RENOVATION?**

You must mentally and emotionally prepare for the dust, debris, and noise of a renovation.

**4 IS THIS REALISTIC?**

You must be realistic about your expectations and consider your budget, resources, and your existing home.

**5 AM I PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE?**

Will you still love the design styles you chose five or ten years from now? Do you expect any significant life changes that may impact your renovation decisions today? Planning for the future will ensure a smart investment and happy outcome.

**6 AM I REMEMBERING THE DETAILS?**

Although a contractor is paid to remember the details, it's up to you to communicate effectively regarding what you want and don't want. Clarity is key in preventing miscommunication.

**7 HAVE I OUTLINED MY GOALS AND VISION?**

Take a realistic inventory of your space, and outline what you would like to see after renovations. How will the renovations affect your home inside, outside, and in the future?

**8 HAVE I BEEN INSPIRED BY OTHERS?**

It's important to avoid costly mistakes made in the past by other homeowners. Do your research, ask questions to those who have undergone a similar experience, talk to friends, and follow up on recommendations. The more research you perform, the more inspired and prudent you will become.

**9 HAVE I PLANNED FOR PROBLEMS?**

Whether it's supply shortages, delays in shipping, or miscommunication with your contractor, it's important to always plan for a few problems. Even if your renovation goes off without a hitch, planning for problems offers you a level of preparedness if something goes awry.

Renovating a home can be a huge undertaking, but the rewards of a well-done remodeling project can last a lifetime, especially with the guidance of a quality and experienced contractor. With nearly 30 years of experience in the Northern Virginia area, Foster Remodeling Solutions has built a reputation as a premier remodeling group with expert craftsmanship.

Contact us today to learn more about how  
**"Our Process Makes it Perfect."**