

Oak Ridge Design Presents: Design Guide 2023

Five Questions to Ask Before You Start a Home Renovation Project

Question One: Is my budget realistic?

One of your first steps should be to talk to a general contractor to get an estimate for construction costs.

1. **Be specific about your scope of work.** What exactly is included in your home renovation? Are you making changes to one or two rooms, or to the whole house? Will you need to replace roofing, siding, windows, and doors? How will it impact electrical, plumbing, and HVAC? Have a detailed list ready.
2. **Quality of materials & craftsmanship.** Let your contractor know if you are doing a high-end install, if you are on a super tight budget, or somewhere in between.
3. **Timing.** Expect to pay a premium if this is a rush job or you have a firm date by when it needs to be finished.



Your contractor gives you an estimate. Great! Now **add 10-20%** to allow for change orders and other surprises.

Don't forget your "soft costs." remember to budget an additional 10-20% for expenses such as design and engineering services, permit fees, and inspection fees.

Question Two: Will this project require permits?

Most construction projects require permits from your local Building Department. **The permit process exists for your protection.** It ensures that the work is done by licensed professionals, and the required inspections hold them to a high standard.



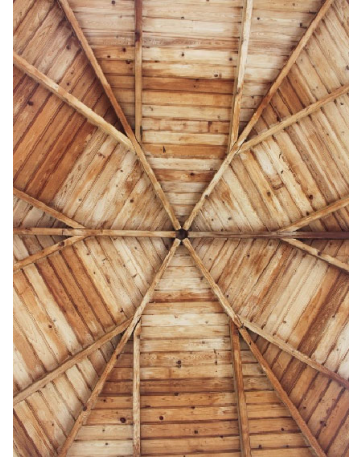
Other permits you may need could include zoning variances, environmental reviews, or approvals by a historic preservation agency. These processes tend to be lengthy and may involve an entire team: surveyors, consultants, engineers, and even land use attorneys. **These are requirements that a contractor may not typically be aware of.** Do your research before you commit.

Depending on your community, your project may also be subject to review by an HOA.

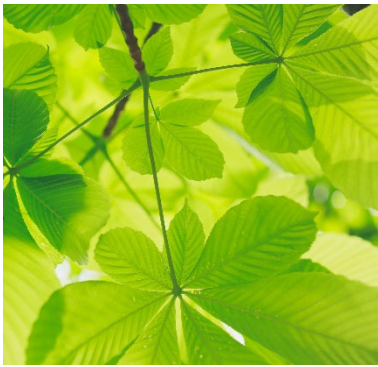
Question Three: Is my home structurally sound?

Do your floors creak, tilt, or have low spots? Are there cracks in the foundation? Does your roof visibly sag? Is your home over 100 years old? **If the answer to any of these questions is yes**, have your home inspected by a structural engineer before starting any construction project.

Why? **The foundation and structure are the most important elements of a house.** A house is only as good as its foundation. The structural members are the bones. Would you want a doctor to stitch a cut and ignore a broken bone underneath?



Question Four: Is my home energy efficient?



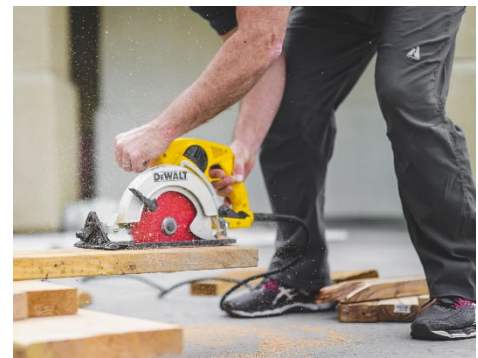
A home renovation is the perfect time to **add insulation** to your walls and roof, improve the seals around doors and windows, and replace your appliances with energy-efficient ones. **Tax credits or grants** may be available to help cover the costs of energy-efficient home improvements.

It may also be a time to **rethink major systems**. Consider replacing oil or gas boilers with electrical heat pumps. Electric heating technology is much more efficient than it used to be, and it allows for using a variety of alternative energy sources.

Question Five: How will this renovation affect my life?

Do you plan on **living in the home during the renovation?** Even a minor construction project will be noisy, dusty, and disrupt daily routines. Will you have periods of time without water, electricity, or heat? Discuss this with your contractor ahead of time so you have realistic expectations.

If you are not living in the home during the renovation, great! Will you need to **move in by a certain date?** Have a backup plan in case the project runs behind schedule.



In the deepest, darkest, messiest phase of a construction project, **remind yourself of the big picture.** You're adding value to your home. You're creating spaces where you will make memories with your loved ones. Keeping the end goal clearly in mind will help you be patient with the process.

Need more help planning your home renovation? Request a free Q&A call with an experienced architectural consultant.

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