

Ten steps to a successful renovation project

Renovating your home is an exciting and rewarding process. Whether you are making modest changes in one or

two rooms, or you are transforming the entire house into the dream of a lifetime, the process can be pleasant and smooth, if

you take the time to plan your project carefully.

The Greater Toronto Home Builders' Association (GTHBA) suggests that homeowners are well on their way to a successful renovation if they follow the 10 steps outlined below.

1. Do your homework

Advance research is the key to getting what you really want. Study magazines and books to get an idea of the look you want. Visit home shows and display rooms to find out what products are available. Talk to friends, family members and colleagues who have renovated recently. Consider your lifestyle and the needs and wishes of your family, both short and long term.

2. Find out how much you can afford

Once you have a firm idea of

the kind of renovation you would like to undertake, it is time to decide how you are going to pay for it.

If you are thinking about using outside funds, discuss your borrowing needs and options with your lender.

You will probably find that there are many financing possibilities to consider, from personal loans and lines of credit to home equity loans and homeowner's mortgages.

3. Look for a professional renovator

For appropriate service and high-quality results, hire a professional renovator. Call the GTHBA at 391-3445 for a list of member-renovators in the Greater Toronto Area and information pamphlets on renovation. Ask family and friends for recommendations.

Drive around your neighborhood to see who is renovating. Talk to homeowners about their projects - most people are delighted to share their renovation experiences.

4. Get estimates

Get two or three different bids; more are usually not required. Make sure that you provide all the renovators with the same detailed information - it is important that they bid on the same job, or you will not be able to compare estimates. This information could be a description of the job including sketches, drawings, photographs and measurements.

For estimates involving major structural changes, such as additions or moving walls, renovators may also need a set of plans that includes site and floor plans, elevations, and detail drawings.

The cost of plans ranges from \$500 to \$800; however, the plan forms the basis for the estimating process and will also be used to obtain building permits.

The renovator may be able to provide you with a plan, based on your drawings and sketches; many, renovators will absorb the cost of the plan if they are chosen for the job.

Be honest and open about your budget. The renovator will be able to make suggestions that will help you stay within your budget or provide alternative ideas to stretch your dollars further.

(See 'Recipe' page 11)

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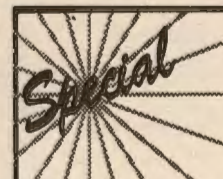
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