

Planning can save you trouble

The renovation road can be a long one. Prepare for disruptions in your everyday living, variable work-completion dates and bills that double original estimates.

For most homeowners, renovations are cosmetic wonders — the final product is usually the most important concern. But it's wise to think beyond the surface.

If renovations are only skindEEP — if they're not sound from the outside in — they're not worth the investment.

Before renovating, check your home's existing structural soundness, electrical wiring and plumbing, insulation levels and air-tightness quality.

If any of these structural elements does not meet today's standards, it's a good idea to upgrade the inadequate feature and then proceed with the renovation.

Since renovators don't know what will have to be replaced until they start work, original estimates can vary greatly from the final cost.

Every house has its own system

of air, heat and moisture flow.

Look beyond the immediate renovation job and consider whether it will have any effect on how the rest of the house works. Renovation plans on paper will help.

If you don't use an architect, it's a good idea to get a draftsman's plan, remember renovating very easily spills out into other rooms.

Before you decide to do a lot of renovation work yourself, make sure you know what expertise is neces-

sary and follow building standards as you go.

If you spend a lot of time and money, and then find out there are basic flaws in the work, you might be spending more money to fix the problem than you would have if you had hired a professional in the first place.

Engineers, building contractors and interior designers should have all the answers you'll need.

Here are a few tips that could help in planning various types of renovation work:

whether you have a chimney or not, is a fairly straightforward job depending on space and budget.

Fireplaces, from those with pre-fabricated components to ones made of masonry, range in price from about \$1,000 to \$9,000 — the latter being the most time-consuming to install.

Consulting engineers will tell you how the positioning of a new fireplace will affect the house's support structure.

They can also tell you if an old fireplace can be remodelled to burn a different fuel.

For example, a wood-burning fireplace might be converted to a gas fireplace.

Bungalows and two-storey houses present different challenges. Bungalows allow chimneys to run through the roof.

Without proper planning, a chimney of a ground-floor fireplace in a two-storey house is apt to run through the middle of a second-floor room.

Consider installing fireplaces close to a room's centre. The critical thing is to try not to have the chimney on an outside wall because you get down drafts.

Corner fireplaces use considerable room space.

Windows. Replacing old, wooden, double-hung windows with air-tight vinyl ones is an expensive job that might not be necessary.

New sashes and rigid plastic weatherstripping will do a very good job of fixing drafty window openings.

It's a do-it-yourself project, costing a fraction of the replacement cost.

In an average home, replacing wooden windows in existing openings with vinyl windows takes a couple of days and costs about \$5,000.

Skylights. Since leaks and condensation plague some skylights, quality is important.

So is installation expertise; it's not a do-it-yourself job. Consulting engineers can help with skylight positioning.

Buying a skylight and installing it are expensive, running from about \$700 to \$900.

Skylights can have an energy penalty. In southern and western locations, overheating is a potential problem, whereas northern and eastern spots might mean heat loss.

The skylight's efficiency will improve as the roof pitch gets steeper.

Stairs. Installing new stairs — a straightforward project — will cost between \$4,000 and \$7,000.

Custom stairs from a stairway or cabinet-making shop come in hundreds of designs.

You can create any size hole in the floor to have any size stairway coming into it. You just have to make sure that that hole is properly engineered so that the floor isn't weakened.

If possible, have the stairmaker install his product.

Additions. Building a new room depends largely on how much space there is on your lot, and architectural esthetics.



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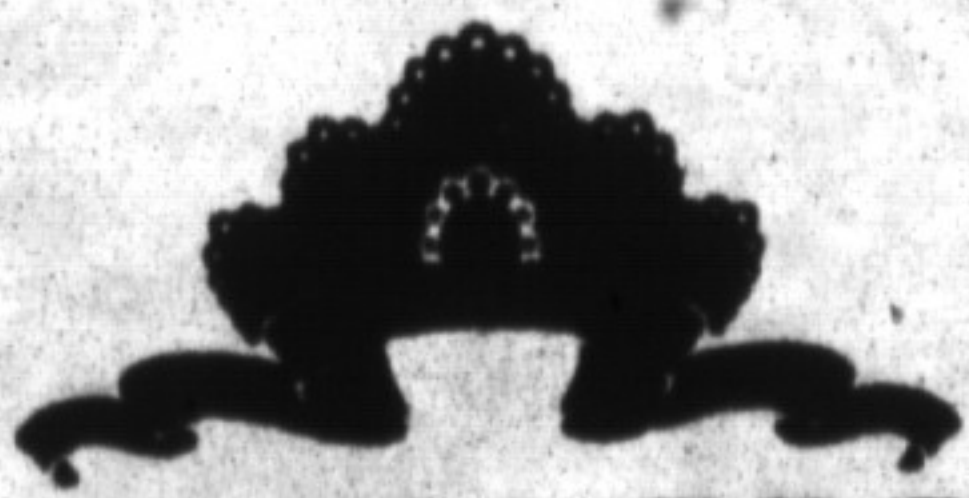


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