

Remodeling Guide—part 1

PLANNING A HOME REMODEL



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What You Need to Know to Successfully Plan
for a Home Remodel



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How to Choose a Remodeler- Part I

What You Need to Know to Successfully Plan for a Home Remodel

By John Murphy

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Key Terms



FIXED PRICE CONTRACT: This is a legal document that guarantees a fixed price project, that covers a thoughtfully designed and planned out scope of work. Typically it includes detailed plans and a comprehensive specs that includes most if not all selections completed.

FREE ESTIMATE: This is a number some remodelers will give you that as a “contract price” used to win the job. After the job starts they will use Change Orders to reflect the real costs of allowances and “items not included” in the document, but it will be too late as the work has already begun. We never ask our clients to commit to a “Free Estimate.”

BALL PARK RANGE: This is not a single number, but a spread or a cost range we usually share with homeowners at the end of the initial “Discovery” meeting so they have some idea of what the project typically requires in terms of budget.

BUDGET: A summary scope and list of items to establish a preliminary cost for a project.

COST PER SQUARE FOOT: This is more useful in new construction and has limited usefulness with certain remodeling such as decks or additions. It is the total cost of a project divided by the number of square feet of the project. Useful for some budgeting exercises. (Example: \$150/sq. ft., vs. \$300/sq. ft.)

EQUITY: The value of your home less what you owe on it.

FINISHES: The hardware and materials applied to your home in the end phases of a building or remodeling project. Examples include countertops, light fixtures, floor covering, cabinets, and appliances. (The term stems from “finishing touches.”)

SCOPE OF WORK: A document that specifies the exact work to be accomplished, including the finishes and other materials. It is part of the building contract and is used as a guide for the people doing the work.

SPECS: Also part of the building contract and contains specifications for the materials used in the build. Used as a reference for producing a budget.

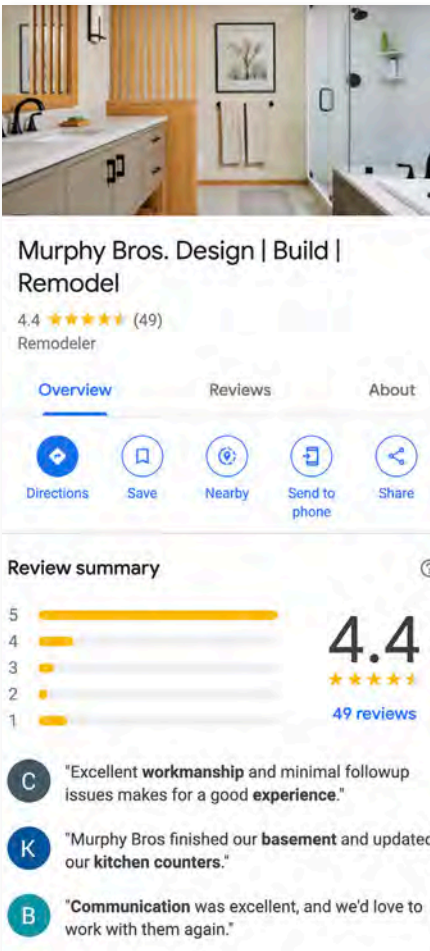
TURN KEY: When a remodel is completed and handed over to a customer completely finished and ready to occupy; no more work is required except to turn the key and step inside.



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Initial Remodeling Company Research

Action Items:



1. Read all their Google reviews. How many do they have? Are there some negative ones and if so how did the company respond to them? Also check on other third party reviews such as Houzz.com and qualitative surveys such as those performed by GuildQuality.com.
2. Thoroughly review their website, Blog, Facebook page and Twitter posts. What are they saying about themselves? What are people saying about them? These forms of communication are a reflection of the company's care for detail and clear communication. Do they perform the type of project you're considering and make a compelling case for working with them?
3. Secure a list of current and past references.
 - a. Usually this is provided at the initial meeting with you but if not, request it be sent to you as soon as possible.
 - b. Failure to provide references is a very big red flag.
4. Call as many references as you can; use our "Builder Reference Questions List" (section 5) as a guide.
5. If possible, walk through their past jobs, or tour one of their BATC Remodeler Showcase Homes in the spring or fall. Do you like the workmanship and design elements?
6. Walk through current jobs and ask yourself:
 - a. Are they clean?
 - b. Are the trade partners approachable and respectful? Conscientious trade partners are a reflection of the relationship with the general contractor.
 - c. Do the carpenters & trade partners on site know who the project manager is? This is an indicator of sound communication and the ability to solve problems quickly.
7. Interview your contact person at the company using our builder interview questions (see page 7) as a guide.



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Remodeling VS. Building a New Home



Complexity – It Will Surprise You

You may think that building a new home is more complex than remodeling, but the opposite is often true. Remodeling work must accommodate the building that is already there. Special care must be taken to preserve the existing structure. On the other hand, building a new home starts from a clean slate, which allows builders to perform each task in the most efficient order. A new home will be compliant with current code, making it safer and more energy efficient. Although a custom home may be a physically larger project, the complexity of a remodel often evolves from a combination of small tasks.

Cost – It Could Go Either Way

Cost all depends on what you choose to do. It is determined by three main factors: size, quality of finishes, and complexity. Size is the physical square footage of the remodel or home. Finishes are the last items added, such as faucets, light fixtures, countertops, and cabinets. Whether you choose the granite countertop with gold-plated faucets or the standard laminate countertop with basic chrome faucets will affect how much you must invest in your project. Complexity depends on whether you are working around existing structures, working with a difficult lot, or building a complicated floor plan, for example.

Build Time – It Depends On Scope and Complexity

The larger and more complex a project, the longer it will take. Depending on scope and complexity, the design process alone can take anywhere from 4 to 18 weeks and require anywhere from 20 to more than 100 hours. Although the bathroom, known as the smallest room in the home, might seem like a quicker build out, a complete tear out and redo can take longer than a moderate kitchen update. Other factors can significantly affect the actual construction of any project, including weather, availability of stock VS the creation of custom products, unforeseen existing conditions such as water intrusion and mold issues. It is your builder's job to see the complexities and obstacles you may not and offer a best estimate of time to build out to completion.

Disruption from Home – It May Be Your Choice

Building a custom home on your existing home site will of course involve the complete dislocation from your home, or simply moving in when it's ready, if you decide to build on a different site. Remodels can involve moving out altogether or merely moving some furniture. Some people will be bothered by the construction noise and disruption and may choose to relocate temporarily, while others may choose not to relocate in order to economize during the project.



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The Skill Sets You Need



“This bid-build approach has a multitude of risks due to the complex nature inherent in building.”

Whether you are building a new home or remodeling your old one, a variety of skill sets, knowledge and experience are needed. Four essential professionals, working closely together, will ensure that you have a safe home with the design you want, with the finishes and materials you want and that also stays within your budget.

The builder usually handles organization of these professionals. However, sometimes homeowners wish to break some of these up into separate pieces and manage them individually, attempting the role of the general contractor. This is also known as the “Bid-Build” model. This approach has a multitude of risks due to the complex nature inherent in building.

However, with the re-emergence of the all encompassing design/build model homeowners are offered a far less risky experience, with quicker build times and at lower costs because all aspects listed below are managed under one roof within a single building agreement.

1. BUILDER: The builder is the quarterback of the team. Builders organize the team and choose successful plays that result in team success.

2. LEAD DESIGNER OR ARCHITECT: The lead designer/architect is the one who creates the design for your home, and takes into account aesthetics, form and functionality, maintenance and durability, curb appeal, colors and finishes, budgets, plans and 3-D layouts. This person makes sure the builder can physically and legally build your design.

3. STRUCTURAL ENGINEER: The engineer makes sure the plans are structurally sound and that they meet engineering requirements, ensuring that the design is safe. Structural engineers protect the integrity of the home.

4. INTERIOR DESIGNER: The interior designer helps pick finishes such as countertops and light fixtures that will look good together and are what you desire. When choosing finishes, good interior designers will consider items that will please you in the long term as styles change. Some lead designers will also do the interior design work for you.



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Trade Partners



These are the hands-on people who do the physical work to complete your home. The builder is generally responsible for hiring, supervising, and paying the trades people.

- Carpenters who frame and trim
- Electricians install the wiring, outlets, switches, and lights
- Plumbers install the pipes, bathtubs and showers, sinks, and faucets
- Roofers install the roof, shingles, and rain gutters
- Trim carpenters install the baseboards and doors
- Siders install siding
- Landscapers install the grass, dirt, plants, sprinklers, and outdoor water features
- Flooring contractors lay the carpet or hard surface floors
- Drywallers install the walls (sheetrock and texture)

Additional Resources:

SOILS ENGINEER: This professional ensures that the site is structurally sound for building. Soil engineers make sure your home will stay where it is rather than tilt sideways or slide in to the street.

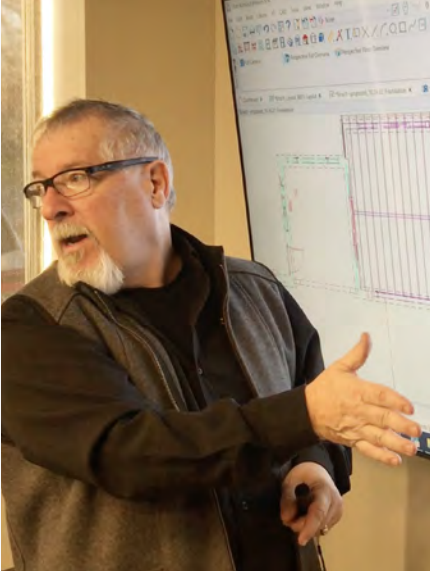
CITY BUILDING DEPARTMENT: This entity gives you the legal go-ahead to build your project. The builder applies to the city building department for permits and inspections.

FINANCING: A loan you obtain from a bank or credit union.



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Builder interview questions list



Our FAQ'S



DESIGN

- Are your estimates free? Why or why not and what is involved?
- If you do designs for free how reliable is that design in terms of cost?

BUDGET

- Do you provide line-item budgets and what is the cost for that?
- What is your philosophy on change orders and how do you handle them?
- How will payments be handled?

SCHEDULE

- How will I know who is going to be in my home and when?
- How often should I expect an update on the project and from whom?
- If there is a delay in the schedule how will you keep me informed?

TRUST & REPUTATION

- What is your license number and how long have you had it?
- Who is your insurance carrier?
- Are you members of any professional organization (s)?
- Where else have you worked on jobs similar to ours?
- Can you supply samples of your work?
- Have you ever been sued or filed any liens? What were the circumstances?
- Can you supply me with current and past references?
- What is your BBB rating and are there any outstanding complaints?

EXPERTISE

- Have you won any awards, which ones and how recent?
- Do you have your own project managers and carpenters on staff?
- How would you rate their design/build knowledge?

COMMUNICATION

- How can I expect to be communicated with? Email? Phone? Text? Other cloud-based systems?

WARRANTY

- What is your warranty policy?

SATISFACTION

- Tell me about an unsatisfied client that you worked with to make them satisfied?
- Do you survey your clients and where do you post those results?



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Builder Reference question list



BUDGET

- Did they present the budget in a clear and orderly manner?
- Was the budget easy to understand?

SCHEDULE

- Did they have a clear and easy to understand schedule that you had in hand or could be checked by phone or on the web?
- Was the project completed on time?

TRUST

- Did they do what they had promised to do?
- Did you have a sense that what you were being told about quality of materials, schedules, options, and budgets was trustworthy?

EXPERTISE

- How would you rate the quality of craftsmanship?
- How would you rate their design/build knowledge?

COMMUNICATION

- Did they communicate expectation clearly?
- Were they responsive in their replies to your inquiries?
- Did you feel that your concerns and ideas were listened to with respect and care?

WARRANTY

- From a process perspective, how were unforeseen problems handled?
- Were problems correctly effectively and in a timely manner?

SATISFACTION

- Were you satisfied with the overall remodeling experience?
- What, if anything, do you wish had been different?

Talk With John

- ✓ Only 10 minutes
- ✓ You pick the date & time
- ✓ Get design trends
- ✓ Budget ranges
- ✓ Advice & guidance

[Schedule Your](#)

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