

# Construction Planning Kit

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## **Table of Context:**

- 1.10 Things to Look For In a Contractor (2-3)
  
- 2. What to Expect During an Initial Consultation (3-4)
  
- 3. Getting Started With a Bathroom Renovation (4-6)
  
  
- 5. Prepping (6-7)

# Construction Planning Kit

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## **10 Things To Look For In a Contractor**

- Make sure the contractor is licensed; In California you can verify contract or check the contractor's license by going to [www.cslb.ca.gov](http://www.cslb.ca.gov)
- Have the contractor add to his liability policy as "additionally insured."
- Be aware of mechanics lien laws: If you don't pay the contractor, he can file a lien on your property. And if he doesn't pay his contractors, they can file a lien against your property. You can request a sub-list at the beginning of the project, as those subs are paid off, your contractor should provide you with release of lien from each sub.
- Ask for references, it's a good sign when the contractor invites you to go see completed projects. You can also look of reviews and ratings online if they have been in business for a while.
- Have your contractor describe in detail the scope of project. From visiting the job site, the contractor should have a solid idea of what it is going to take to remedy your problem. Contractor should be able to reference past projects that required a similar remedy.
- Ethics: Don't under value the importance of your contractors' ethics. A professional will put his clients' interests as a top priority. Hiring an honest contractor is always less expensive than hiring a dishonest one. Be wary of an initially low price, an unethical contractor will hit you with subliminal costs that were not reflected in his original estimate.
- Negotiating: In many cases contractors will negotiate a lower price if it means getting a larger job. It never hurts to ask for a discount.
- Communication: During your initial meeting with the contractor an important personality trait to consider is how he communicates with you. Ask yourself, is this someone I can work with? Do I understand what his plan is? Does he understand what my needs and wants are? Many times it pays to hire a contractor at a higher price if he is a better communicator. Better communication = a better end result.
- Evaluating the bid: Avoid lump sum bids! These bids tend to not reflect in detail the true costs of the project. An itemized bid with the labor and material breakdown is best. The itemized bid should spell out clearly the scope of work that the home owner requested and the costs required by the contractor to deliver.
- How much time will it take to finish my home improvement project? Along with a contractor, request an estimated time schedule for completion. Negotiate with the

# Construction Planning Kit

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contractor a payment schedule that fairly coincides with the completion schedule. You want to release funds at the progression of work occurs. Special consideration should be given such as purchasing; cabinets and other large ticket items. For big purchases you can negotiate to release more so your contractor can buy them. A fair payment protocol should be negotiated with the contractor ahead of time.

## **What To Expect During an Initial Consultation**

If you're considering a home remodeling project, the first step is consulting with a dependable remodeling company. Consultations are generally free. What can you expect during that initial consultation?

### **Discussing the Project**

The remodeler will visit your house and see the current layout. He or she will ask you what you want to change and what you want to retain. You will need to give the consultant ideas about your current lifestyle and how you wish to utilize a new space.

### **Goals and Priorities**

The remodeler will ask you what you want to achieve through the home remodeling process.

- More floor space?
- More storage?
- More efficiency?
- Better traffic patterns?
- Better visual appeal?
- More up-to-date appearance?

Sometimes different goals come into conflict with each other. Then you need to determine your top priorities. Is it more important to have natural light coming into the bathroom or a more efficient design? The consultant can help guide you to an answer.

### **Brainstorm Design Ideas**

The consultant will help you consider different options for how to accomplish your goals, giving you different ideas for your home remodeling project. This is a valuable part of the process. Although you probably have some ideas for design, an expert can give you suggestions you maybe haven't considered.

### **Learn About the Company**

The remodeler should tell you something about their company during the initial visit. You can learn about the various steps in their design and construction process. The consultant may also tell you about the people who will be working on your project, whether they are subcontractors or employees of the company, and how long the process will take.

# Construction Planning Kit

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## **Preliminary Budget**

A home remodeling company cannot give you a definite budget for your project until you have made the final decisions on materials and other details. During the initial consultation, they will give you an estimate for what the project is likely to cost. The consultant will break the budget into different categories, which will help you decide where you want to spend your money and where you might want to conserve.

## **Getting Ready for a Bathroom Renovation**

We all know how overwhelming a bathroom remodeling project can be. We understand that there are a million options to choose from. To make it easier on you, we have put together some questions to ask yourself.

What does your bathroom mean to you? It is usually the first room you walk into after waking up. It can set the tone for your day. For some, their master bath is a calm and restorative place to get away to. For others, the bath is a frustration. Common problems are, outdated or failing fixtures, inadequate lighting, old finishes that are difficult to keep clean, and poor layout and storage.

Although it is usually one of the smallest rooms in the home, the renovation of a bathroom can be surprisingly complex and costly. A bathroom renovation usually requires several skilled trades during construction – carpenter, electrician, plumber and heating contractor. Some bath renovations will also include custom cabinetry and special tile or stone installations. To keep costs in line, we offer rough design and cost estimates prior to undertaking full design work on a bathroom. The earliest phase in the design process is the best time to scale back if your budget requires.

## **Getting Started**

Start gathering bathroom images for ideas. Make a quick note on each image describing what you like about that bathroom. ('great colors' or 'beautiful tub' ) These notes are invaluable for the designer who will pull these items together for you.

## **General Feeling**

What words describe your dream bathroom? Would you like it to be soothing, tranquil, cozy, a retreat, huge, modern, old fashioned?

## **Layout**

- How does your current bathroom work for you now? If it doesn't work so well for you, have you thought about a solution? Is there an opportunity to enlarge the room?

# Construction Planning Kit

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- Are there any items in the existing bathroom that can be reused such as cabinetry, lighting or plumbing?
- Do you have good natural light and ventilation in the room? Is there an opportunity to add more if necessary?

## Fixtures and controls

- List the plumbing items: Sink, toilet, tub and/or shower. Do you prefer separate sinks? What kind of style? Pedestal sink or vanity, a freestanding tub or one that is mounted in a tub deck?
- Think about the shape and finish of the controls.
- Use low-flow faucets and low-flow or dual-flush toilets
- Consider a tankless hot water heater.

## Floors and Walls

- What floor and wall materials will give you the look you desire for your bathroom? Can these materials be used to create patterns, and do you want to use them that way?
- Would you like an in-floor heating system?
- Use low VOC paint and wood finishes.
- Consider eco-friendly finishes – wood flooring, recycled content ceramic tile, stone tile, or exposed concrete. Natural linoleum is made from natural materials can be finished in a range of colors, and can be installed without the use of adhesives.

## Storage

- Will you have a vanity, and if so, what will be stored there?
- What other storage or display needs do you need the bathroom?
- What styles and finishes of cabinetry do you prefer?
- Make sure that cabinetry built with plywood (which often contains urea formaldehyde glue, which can cause a range of health issues) is properly sealed before entering your home. Or use solid wood cabinetry and solid surface countertops to avoid the use of plywood.

## Lighting Fixtures

- You'll need lighting at the mirror(s) and some general light from overhead fixtures.

# Construction Planning Kit

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- Do you read in the bath or shave in the shower?
- While you are considering light, think about dimming and control options.
- Use halogen and LED lighting for light quality and energy efficiency.

## Window treatments

Consider privacy needs, style, color and pattern.

## Accessories

Mirrors, towel bars, tissue holders, soap dishes, and robe hooks are useful items with decorative importance. Think about size, style, finish, practicality and ease of cleaning.

## Air Quality

- Install an exhaust fan that properly vents to the exterior.
- Plants improve the air quality and are an attractive balance to the otherwise hard surfaces in the room.

## Greening the Process

The early planning stage is the best time to consider opportunities to ‘green it up’, or to make selections or decisions that will improve the environmental impact and energy and water use for the space. In addition to some of the considerations noted above, the following are sustainable practices and detailing we include as standard in our renovation projects:

- A well-designed and ‘timeless’ space won’t need to be renovated again, saving energy and resources for the future.
- A bathroom renovation usually involves demolition of the wall surfaces – this is a great opportunity to not only improve the wall, ceiling and floor insulation, but to also better insulate all plumbing and heating pipes ductwork.
- Sealing leaks in doors, windows, plumbing, ducting, and electrical wire, and penetrations through exterior walls, floors, ceilings and soffits over cabinets will save additional energy.

## Prepping

Construction can be a messy business. Remember we have to take your home apart before we put it back together. Prepare for the mess...dusty area mentally. You will have to live with a certain amount of dust and noise, especially if you plan to live in the residence. Plastic curtains

## Construction Planning Kit

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should line the perimeter of the affected areas. "Ram Board" layout board ram board should protect the carpet or tile that will receive heavy traffic during construction. I have spent \$500 lay-out this stuff in order to protect client's flooring. You should feel like you are in an incubator looking out into your home. If you don't feel like you are, then continue adding plastic till you do. When laying out the plastic pay special attention to book shelves. It could take forever to clean out those books. Wrap any book shelves in plastic. Look around for any hard to clean items...either remove them from the area to be remodeled or cover them up. Budget \$450 to have your home totally detailed after construction is complete.

**Please feel free to contact us to discuss your upcoming project.**

**Please visit our website to check out our current bathroom remodel promotions.**