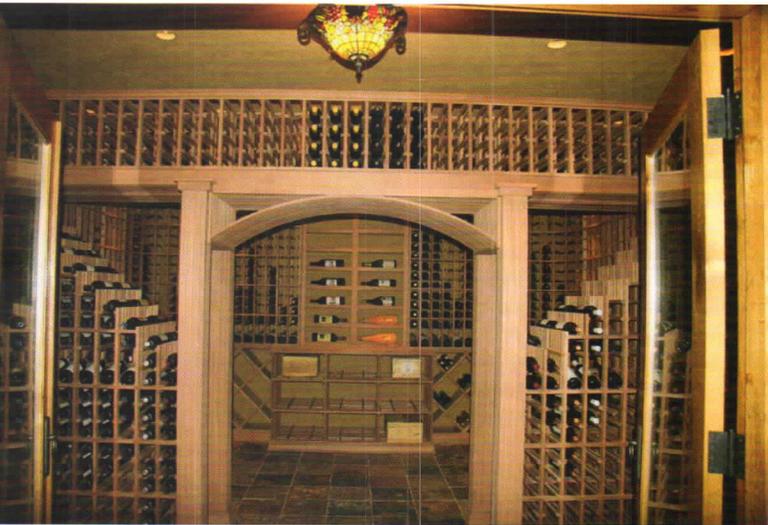


# The Art of Remodeling

By Bill Hoadley, H&Y Construction

Remodeling or renovating your home can be intimidating and full of cost overruns (see Tom Hanks in *The Money Pit*). Many think it is easier just to relocate or build a new home than it is to remodel one, when in fact it can be a much better return on your investment to remodel. Many would-be remodelers hold off as long as possible to make that difficult decision to get started. As a result, we frequently see that the process becomes rushed. As a consequence, it is the builder, who has the most work to do, who ends up with the least amount of time to do it. This article is meant to provide the basic steps for taking on this task and enjoying it, start to finish.



## Step One

Hire an architect or design professional who can provide insight, valuable advice on functionality, and produce working drawings for permitting. If possible, hire someone who you have a personal connection with in the architectural and design field. Make sure that this professional has experience with the specific building and zoning departments that you will need to obtain permits and approvals from. This may also include knowing site engineers, wetland specialists, landscape architects and others. These are all important things to consider prior to doing any design.

Expanding your footprint by adding additional “conditioned” square footage, like a basement or expanded attic space, to your home, may change your design criteria. Not only will that potentially increase cost, it could also trigger the need for fire sprinklers, septic upgrades, onsite storm water drainage system, variances, and possibly a visit with an Architectural Review Board. This first step is crucial to your remodeling plan and needs to be done correctly to limit surprises.

## Step Two

Start with design and formulating a budget with your architect or design professional. Let one of those, depending on which is more important to you, take the lead. If you know what design you want and budget is not a constraint, then you have your order. If budget is a constraint, begin with that. Do not withhold budget information thinking that you can manage design ... that never turns out well.

You may consider engaging a builder early in the process to provide budgeting. This could be done two ways. First, if you have a builder who you already favor, you could agree to a ‘cost plus a fee’ contract. This builder will

be someone you may already know and trust and whose business relies on building relationships and life-long partnerships with their clients. Get them involved early to help work with you on budget control. The second way would be to pay a builder or professional estimating service to help with your budget.

## Step Three

Completion of working drawings and hiring your builder. If you did not decide on a builder in Step 2, then you are going to bid your job to multiple bidders and then qualify the bids. The entire process can take 6 weeks, so start as early as possible. Interview the bidders and decide which builder you are most comfortable with.

## Step Four

Sign a contract that insists that no additional money is spent without your knowledge and signature of approval. Be mindful that efficient and collaborative decision making on changes that will inevitably arise is the key to any remodel. Clear, decisive decisions give a job momentum that cannot be created any other way.

## Step Five

Start construction with a project schedule showing a critical path to finish with key dates for decisions not made at the start. Weekly site meetings with the owner, builder, and architect/designer are extremely helpful with keeping a job on track. The schedule will follow that momentum and create a productive and enjoyable project for all parties!

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