



RENOVATIONS . CUSTOM HOMES
HERITAGE RESTORATIONS . COMMERCIAL

10 STEPS TO SUCCESSFULLY RENOVATE YOUR HOME

Renovating your home can be an exciting and rewarding process. Whether you are making modest changes in one or two rooms, or you are transforming the entire house into a dream of a lifetime, the process can be pleasant and smooth -- if you take the time to plan your project carefully.

The Renovation Council of the Greater Vancouver Home Builders' Association (GVHBA), suggests that homeowners can ensure a successful renovation if they follow these 10 steps.

Do Your Homework

Advance research is the key to getting what you want. Review magazines, books and websites to get an idea of the look you want. Visit friends, family members and colleagues who have renovated recently. Consider your lifestyle and the needs of your family, both in the short and long term. A professional renovator can help assess the feasibility.

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.

Look For a Professional Renovator

For appropriate service and high-quality results, hire a professional renovator. Click on "Find a Member" on the GVHBA website for a list of member renovators in the Greater Vancouver area. Ask family and friends for recommendations. Drive around your neighbourhood to see who is renovating, then talk to the homeowners about their project. Most people are delighted to share their renovation experiences.

Choose Your Contractor

Once you have acquired names of several professional renovators, interview them. Be sure you have listed all the items that are important to you. Choose a couple of the renovators you feel most comfortable with. If you have plans and specifications have the chosen renovators provide you with a proposal. If you do not have plans already, ask the chosen renovators to provide you with a proposal and a budget for a design build project. Most professional renovators will provide a complete service including their own in-house or private designers or architects.

Check References

Don't omit this step just because you are too busy or "they seem like the right person for the job." Call the GVHBA, the renovator's previous clients, the bank and the building supply store to ensure that you are making the right choices.

Work Out a Contract

Don't automatically take the lowest bid, unless you are certain that the renovator has properly understood what you want. Sometimes low bids turn out to be the most expensive in the end.

If you accept the renovator's offer, it's time to write up the contract. Even the simplest of jobs should be outlined in writing because the contract is the basis of understanding between you and your renovator. Before signing a contract, read it carefully. Are you satisfied with the description of the work to be done? Does the payment schedule include holdbacks? Are the responsibilities of the renovator clearly spelled out? Remember that if something is not in the contract, then it's your responsibility. Have a lawyer examine the contract before you sign it.

Plan How You Will Live During the Renovation

Careful planning can greatly minimize inconvenience of living in the midst of a renovation. Talk to your renovator about the schedule of work to be done and how your daily routine might be affected. For instance, will the water be turned off for any length of time? Do you need to set up a temporary kitchen elsewhere in the home? Can major work be done in stages so you always have some livable space? Discuss your expectations of the work crew and determine the work environment. The crew needs access to washroom facilities, telephones, water and electricity. Decide which areas of your home are off limits.

It is a good idea to let your neighbours know that you are going to be renovating. Show them your plans and explain how long the work will be going on.

Establish a Good Working Relationship with Your Renovator

Renovators and homeowners agree that a good working relationship is a vital ingredient in successful renovation projects. Mutual trust is essential. Keep lines of communication open at all times. Expect a brief report on the progress of your job at regular intervals, perhaps every evening. Be available to make decisions when they are needed so work is not held up, perhaps costing you more money. Don't hesitate to bring your concerns to the attention of the renovator.

Try To Stick With Your First Choices

Once work is underway, changes should be kept to a minimum. The details of your project, described in the contract, down to the finishing touches, form the basis of both the price and the schedule of your job. Changes could affect both significantly. Your GVHBA member renovator, however, wants you to be satisfied with the final result, and will likely attempt to accommodate any alteration in plans, as long as you accept a possible delay in completion and/or a change in price.

Enjoy the Results

Research, good planning, a professional work crew and open communication and trust -- a recipe for a home renovation that you will enjoy for years to come!

Source: Greater Vancouver Home Builders Association