

Chaos. Frustration. Out-of-control costs. Unexpected delays. Many homeowners have come to expect these as necessary evils which must be endured in order to have the home of their dreams. Our clients will tell you that it doesn't have to be that way. They will tell you that their remodel was carefully planned and executed, that they were always in control of the budget, and that they knew exactly what to expect.

Our collaborative method ensures that your design develops in close concert with your budget and that your remodel will always be driven by your priorities. Our estimates are meticulously detailed and full-disclosure, so you never have to wonder what you're buying. Since 1998, we have helped over two hundred and fifty savvy Bay Area homeowners explore their options and remodel with confidence. Here is a brief summary of how our process works:

PRIORITIES

After an initial chat by phone, we meet with you (and your design professional, if applicable,) typically at the project site, so that you can tell us what you really want from your remodel. The *why* is as important as the *what*; is this to be your home-sweet-home for years to come, tailored exactly to your tastes, or is resale value first on your mind? Is it some combination of the two? The more you can tell us about your remodeling priorities, the more effectively we can help you prepare. Think big, broad strokes; we'll address the details soon enough.

PRICING

Once we know more about your goals, we can begin a conversation about the process. Cost is usually the first concern, so we begin by compiling your Estimating Template. Itemized by trade, your preliminary estimate includes detailed, but approximate, pricing for every major aspect of your remodeling concept and provides your first good look at the work your remodeling dollar can accomplish.

This is often the stage at which your design professional may begin preparing schematic drawings. In addition to giving shape to the concept, these basic drawings facilitate a cursory, over-the-counter plan review at the building and planning departments. This is an easy and effective means of preventing potential code-compliance issues from becoming unpleasant surprises in the future.

BALANCE

After you have reviewed your Estimating Template and provided us with your feedback, the estimate values and the drawings are updated to include more of what you want and less of what you don't. We help you make informed decisions which maximize efficiency, value, and return on your investment. It is at this stage that we begin getting quotes from subcontractors and start fine-tuning all of the estimate's cost items. Your design professional will begin helping you choose fixtures and finishes and we update the estimate accordingly. This process continues until we have arrived at a solid pairing of design and price that works for your budget. At that point, your revised estimate is then ready to serve as your working remodeling budget.

ORGANIZE

Your project will require you to answer a myriad of questions, both large and small. It is your architect's and your contractor's responsibility to help you understand your options so that you may make informed decisions. Your personalized Owner's Checklist is your itemized and consolidated inventory of virtually every question not already clearly answered in the plans. Do you want matte or glossy switch plate covers? Matte or glossy paint on the door trim? Regular shower glass or water-repellent, low-iron-content glass? Your Owner's Checklist allows you ample time to ask questions, make good decisions, and feel prepared for construction.

We hope you will allow us to help you plan and create a carefully orchestrated project guided by your priorities. We look forward to hearing from you when you are ready to get started.

"Quality means doing it right when nobody is looking." -H. Ford



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TIPS FOR HIRING A CONTRACTOR

DON'T:

- give anyone promising to perform work on your home a deposit of more than 10% or \$1,000.00 (*whichever is LESS*) before construction work has started. Any contractor asking for more money up front is breaking the law and risks losing his or her license and/or going to jail.
- hire anyone to perform more than \$500.00 worth of work on your property without verifying the validity of his or her California Contractor's License (<https://www2.cslb.ca.gov/OnlineServices/CheckLicense/NameRequest.asp>).
- hire anyone promising to perform work under the auspices of another contractor's license. That's illegal, and can mean that the person(s) performing the work has no real contractual responsibility.
- hire a contractor without first obtaining certificates of their workers' compensation and liability insurance policies, or you will assume all liability for any accidents or injuries.
- sign a contract without a clear, **itemized**, written description of the scope of work. A proposal comprised of only a brief summary, or one which only says it will build what is shown in the plans, leaves far too many items open to interpretation and then disagreement. This unfortunate, yet all-too-common, scenario virtually guarantees that a project will become more expensive and time-consuming than expected. Don't assume that things will turn out the way you hope they will. Get it in writing first.

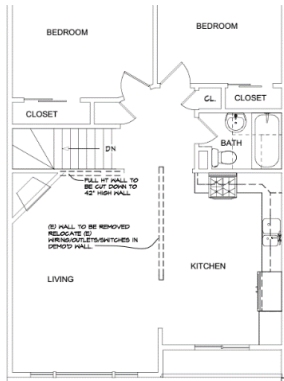
DO:

- work together with your builder, architect, and designer to develop an efficient, practical, and pleasing design that you can afford.
- check prospective contractors' references, license(s), and insurances.
- ask to see contractors' finished work.
- have a budget target in mind early in the pre-construction process and share it with your builder, architect, and/or designer. A good builder's goal is not to squeeze as much money as possible from a project. On the contrary, we believe in helping our clients see how hard their construction dollar can work toward the results they want. It is precisely this commitment to providing value which has kept us in business since 1999.

TIPS FOR HIRING AN ARCHITECT

- Perhaps the most important advice we can offer on this topic is this: don't pay an architect to draft comprehensive plans for a project before you know, at least roughly, how much it will cost to build.
- Choose an architect (and a contractor, for that matter) who you want on your *team* -- someone you feel is attentive and with whom you feel comfortable. That may sound a little touchy-feely, but you will be working closely and often, in your own private home, with your architect or designer, as well as your contractor.
- In theory, a flat fee for architecture is often preferable but is not always feasible. Never sign anything without at least a not-to-exceed cost cap in place. Architects should meet with you, walk through the home with you, and then submit a proposal (at no charge) which will outline their fee structure for your project. Expect a flat fee for two or three schematic concepts and an estimated cost for the subsequent permitting-and-construction-drawings phase. I doubt any architect would put a fixed fee on the permitting phase before they knew the scope of work. They may be able to provide a fixed fee, however, once the scope has been clearly defined.
- Aggregate costs for architectural design and plans construction assistance are typically 12% to 15% of the construction costs, regardless of how the fees are apportioned.
- Most architects and designers can provide 3-D renderings. Here's why they can be helpful in visualizing a new floor plan, for instance:

Standard architectural floor plan:



2 SECOND LEVEL FLOOR PLAN (EXISTING)
SCALE: 1/4"=1'-0"

The same space as shown in 3-D renderings:



- *Always* retain your architect for construction assistance. Even the most thorough plan set and detailed budget will still require the architect's involvement. For instance, one of our current jobs has accumulated over 400 discrete email threads between our staff and the architect in the space of three months. Construction assistance is such a critical component of remodeling we won't take on a project without it. There are simply far too many moving parts to entrust to anything short of comprehensive oversight.
- Be fair to the architects you interview by affording them all the same opportunity to submit proposals for the same project. Simply walking through the home and waving your hand towards a kitchen that needs work will get you proposals for very different projects which cannot be effectively compared against one another. Here's how to do it right: Spend a couple of hours typing up a description of your ideal remodel and share this with each architect with whom you engage.