



Monique Breaux

# Remodeling

## LEAVE IT TO THE EXPERTS

AS an award winning designer of 18 years, remodels are one of my favorite design challenges. However, they are by all definitions the hardest and most costly projects to undertake. There are so many issues that go into a remodel that cannot be recognized before the demolition begins. It is virtually impossible to stick to a budget unless you have an overage built into the estimate for all of the unforeseen issues that usually arise.

As popularity continues to grow for all of these do-it-yourself TV shows and as a designer for HGTV myself, there is much that is not quite apparent in a 30 minute show that has gone wrong or has unexpectedly driven the budget up considerably. It has been my experience that a small remodel never turns out to be a small task; instead, it snowballs in terms of design, time and budget.

So I am frequently asked the million dollar question: how do you stop from getting in over your head in renovation projects? The simple answer is to leave it to the experts.

## CONSULT A SPECIALIST

Reputable architects, designers, draftsman, contractors and subcontractors who have earned a strong footing in the community along with multiple references are indispensable to any renovation project. With that being said, when one considers hiring an architect, designer or contractor for design they should do so based on past performance and in reference to a desired end result. If they don't have projects in their portfolio of work that reflects your taste, move on to someone who does.

As in any profession, typically a person excels in one area over another. This also holds true in the design industry. There is a considerable difference between contemporary design and traditional design, as well as other styles and how they will be executed. Do your research and select your renovation team accordingly.

Whenever plumbing, electrical, flooring, cabinets and counter tops will be involved, which is typically always the case in renovating a bathroom or kitchen remodel, seek advice from the experts. Let these specialists have a look at what you are dreaming of doing in your home, and let them tell you exactly what may be involved.

If you choose to hire an architect or designer to assist you in the renovation process, these professionals specialize in design and are familiar with construction and the trades that will be involved. They can be a wealth of knowledge to you before this process begins. In many of these cases both designers and architects can be hired as consultants by the hour to get you started and set you on the right path.

## RESEARCH FIRST

Do your research before diving into anything. First, gather sample ideas of what you would like; this could be through tear sheets from publications, website research, etc. Know what you expect the end result to be. It is more important for you to have a direct connection with your end result than ways to achieve it.

Be very clear about how much you want to spend. We all have a tendency to select pictures of items we love; however, they may be triple our estimated budget. Be realistic with your expectations. Bathrooms and kitchens typically cost the most to renovate but also add the most value to a home.



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## IF YOU PLAN TO SELL

If you are living in an older home and planning on selling it at one time or another or if this renovation is based on an update to sell, you should get a real estate agent involved. You need to know if you can get out of the home what you put into it in terms of renovation costs. There is no better person to give you this info than a real estate agent who deals with this process daily.

I often call on experienced real estate agents when I am working on certain projects because they are the professionals who can give you hard numbers on what homes are selling for in your area. This is an essential resource of information when you are considering remodeling to sell.

I cannot tell you how many clients have told me, "I am going to die in this house," and they end up selling the house and starting the process all over! Always keep in mind that one day that house will sell so you need to always maintain a reasonable balance between renovation cost and selling cost.

## THE UGLY OF THE PROJECT

Now, let's talk about the ugly of the project. Any renovation is messy on all accounts. Don't forget you have to move everything out of the area being renovated thus creating another area that most often leads to disorganization. If it is a bathroom remodel and you have another bathroom to use, this renovation is not as bad but still messy and dusty.

Don't forget that you have trades in your home every day until the project is complete, sometimes even on weekends. However, the big one is the kitchen. You must create a makeshift kitchen in another area of your home which makes it seem like everything is turned upside down.

It is my suggestion that if you have the opportunity to move out of the section of your home or even out of your home completely while this renovation is taking place your sanity will be more secure! If you chose to live in the midst of the renovations process, be prepared. Don't set yourself up for failure.

This is a messy process; appreciate it for what it is, and go into it knowing that it will take patience and a major alteration of your daily routine. I often suggest kitchen remodels over the summer when schedules seem to be a little more flexible.

## IT'S WORTH THE END RESULT

Let me leave you with this thought: the mess and distraction that a remodel may cause is well worth the end result. For you moms out there, I often compare the renovation process to labor pains. Once you're living in your remodeled space you quickly forget any pain it may have caused! But for all, there is nothing more enjoyable than walking into your newly renovated space, a space that you will be proud to boast that you expertly created for yourself!

**GR8 LIVING CONTEST**  
Send in your before and after pictures of your remodel (any area of the home) to [Gr8living@008magazine.com](mailto:Gr8living@008magazine.com). A winner will be announced in next issue and awarded a designer lamp from Posh Exclusive Interiors!

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