

# A SMART GUIDE TO RENOVATION PLANNING



## Introduction

Anyone who's ever watched an HGTV show may be excused for thinking home renovation is easier than it really is. There's the funny host, the homeowner on a budget, a bit of drama, some quick shots of the actual work, culminating in the big reveal—all in under 30 minutes. Easy!

While it makes for good TV, we all know this isn't true. Home renovation is complex, labor-intensive and sometimes unpredictable. That's why planning is crucial.

Planning isn't the most exciting stage of a renovation, but it's a prerequisite for good reason.

- Planning helps you define your priorities and develop a clear vision
- Planning ensures that your project runs safely, smoothly and to budget
- Most importantly, planning keeps you sane and in sync with your contractor through what could otherwise be a stress-filled experience

In this e-book, we'll walk you through the steps you need to take to plan a successful renovation. Whether you're a home improvement veteran or completely new to the process, there's something in this guide for you!



## Renovation Budgeting: Looking Beyond the Basics

For the vast majority of homeowners, budget will be the first hurdle. After all, how much money you can afford to spend will determine what you're able to do! The surest way to make the renovation process stressful and unpleasant is to not plan a realistic budget.



## 5 Steps to Planning Your Renovation Budget

If you want your renovation to proceed without a hitch, be prepared to do some homework. Planning your budget one step at a time and in a logical order will help keep you from feeling overwhelmed.

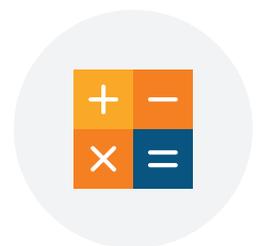
- 1. Write down your goals.** List all the changes you hope to achieve through the renovation. Keep your list (or lists, if you're tackling more than one area of the home) in a three-ring binder. This binder is what you'll use to organize all the documents related to your project.
- 2. Measure your home.** Measure the dimensions of the room or exterior area for renovation. Create a rough draft of the area in question on graph paper, marking where windows, doors and other key architectural elements are located.





## 5 Steps to Planning Your Renovation Budget (cont.)

- 3. Find inspiration.** There are plenty of ways to get ideas for your remodel. You can look online, attend home shows, visit local showrooms, or even use your neighborhood for inspiration. Put your planning binder to good work, especially when taking down brand names, model numbers and pricing information.
- 4. Get estimates.** Schedule consultations with reputable local remodelers. You'll want to get three or four estimates before you finalize your budget. Keep in mind that estimates aren't set in stone, even if you already have a specific product in mind. For instance, if you plan to install LP® SmartSide® products, pricing can still vary quite a bit depending on the complexity of your project, the expected timeline, and a few other factors.
- 5. Build your budget.** Use the cost estimates you obtained to create your budget and plan a renovation timeline. Remember to factor in some wiggle room in case of surprises.





## 5 Mistakes That Can Send You Over Budget

*Apartment Therapy* claims that more than two-thirds of renovation projects go over budget, which goes to show how important realistic budget expectations are. Here's what you should avoid if you don't want your wallet to take any surprise hits.

- 1. Working off the cheapest estimate.** When you make budget decisions based on the most affordable estimate, the quality of materials is often the first to be compromised. That's the last thing you want! To avoid cutting corners on quality or setting yourself up for huge overages, work your budget off a middle-of-the-road estimate from the get-go.
- 2. Not budgeting any wiggle room.** No renovation can be 100 percent predictable, and the same goes for renovation costs. Common sense dictates that you factor a cushion into your budget. Experts advise adding 10 percent to your expected costs, more if you live in an older home.
- 3. Allowing an ambiguous scope of work.** A scope of work is a set of documents that specifies exactly what is and isn't included in the contractor's quote. Any ambiguity in the scope of work creates gray areas in the renovation, resulting in disorganization and delays.



## 5 Mistakes That Can Send You Over Budget (cont.)

- 4. Not accounting for seasonality.** A survey administered to LP® BuildSmart™ program members showed that December, January and February are the worst months for renovation. Both building efficiency and product workability are hit hard by inclement weather, leading to work delays and material waste.
- 5. Making changes mid-project.** This is the fastest way to blow your renovation budget. A change order doesn't just add to material costs and cause delays; it also comes with a markup to cover the cost of processing the change itself.



## 5 Ways to Maximize Your Renovation's Benefits

Once you've settled on what you believe is a reasonable and realistic renovation budget, it's time to define and refine the scope of your project. This is when your wish list becomes what is essentially a preliminary scope of work.

It's normal for there to be a lot of back and forth in this stage of planning. You'll know you're on the right track when you're thinking of how the renovation can benefit the day-to-day function, comfort and convenience of life in your home for as long as possible.

If you want to maximize your project's long-term benefits and really get the most for your remodeling dollar, follow these tips.

**5/50  
YEAR****LIMITED  
WARRANTY**

### 1. Choose building materials that last.

This applies to both interior and exterior renovations, but it's outside the home that you'll really see your money at work. Products like LP® SmartSide® engineered wood siding are specifically made to withstand harsh climates, making them a more cost-effective choice than cheaper materials that you may need to replace after a few years.

### 2. Consider the warranty.

A generous warranty is a good indication that a manufacturer is confident in its product's performance and lifespan. For your own peace of mind look for warranties with a long coverage period, a transferability feature, and protection against material defects. The [LP SmartSide 5/50 Year Limited Warranty](#) is one such example.

### 3. Increase utility and efficiency, not size.

Any increase in square footage, whether we're talking home additions or room expansions, will come at cost. And yet it often turns out that what homeowners perceive as a lack of space is really a lack of utilization. Check and recheck your available space for opportunities to maximize function before considering an expansion.



#### **4. Incorporate small changes that make a big impact.**

High impact doesn't have to mean high cost! Examples of relatively small changes that pay dividends include creative trim applications, faux stone accents, landscape lighting, solar tubes, and even invisible upgrades like insulation around recessed lights.

#### **5. Choose long-term savings over short-term gains.**

Pre-primed and prefinished materials like LP® SmartSide® Trim & Siding products are a great example of “pay now, save later” renovation options. You pay extra for the factory finish, but save even more on future paint jobs.

Here's one question we've yet to ask: What if this isn't your “forever home”?

These tips still apply—only instead of just enhancing your own experience of living in your home, you're also passing the benefits on to the next homeowner. What's more, smart remodeling choices can help improve your home's saleability and increase your chances of recouping your investment.



## 5 Questions to Ask Your Remodeler's References

Most home improvement guides talk about asking prospective remodelers for references. You're encouraged to ask to see samples of their past projects and to have them explain why those projects were chosen for the portfolio.

But what are you supposed to do once you have those references?

Here are some questions to ask once a contractor has provided a list of former clients.

### 1. **Was the job done according to budget?**

Having a renovation go over budget isn't necessarily a red flag, but find out why it went over budget if you can. You need to know if budgeting problems are a pattern with this particular remodeler—or, worse, if past customers believe they were misled about the cost of materials.



## **2. Were there any surprises during the project?**

Again, surprises aren't unheard of or even all that uncommon. But how were the unforeseen issues dealt with? Was the work delayed in any significant way because of them? Learning how the remodeler handles setbacks can help you gauge their professionalism and level of expertise.

## **3. Did they provide adequate details on the materials used and their warranties?**

All of these should be clearly outlined in the contract. Ask whether advice was given regarding which materials to use and why, and what the client thought about the contractor's recommendations.

## **4. Did the remodeler show up on time?**

This is a pretty basic question, but it says a lot about the remodeler's work ethic. Ask about their hours, their workflow, whether it was easy to find and communicate with the project manager, and how they handled site preparation and cleanup.



## 5. Would you hire the remodeler again?

A homeowner who has had a great experience with a contractor will not hesitate to say so. If they are unwilling to give them their repeat business, find out why.

A remodeler's previous customers are some of the most valuable and most accurate resources available. Don't skip them when you're doing your homework!



## 5 Tips on Working with Your Remodeler

A renovation is an important—and, in some cases, long-term—partnership. You don't have to be your remodeler's best friend for a job to be successful, but a good working relationship definitely helps.

Here are five ways you can help the process run more smoothly.

### 1. Educate yourself.

Contractors appreciate clients who are organized and who know what they want and how much they are willing to spend. Bonus points if you make an effort to become familiar with industry lingo and remodeling options before your consultation! You don't need to understand all the intricacies of construction; just have a firm enough grasp of the basics to be able to make informed decisions.

All of this will make it easier for you to clearly articulate your vision and for them to discuss the details of the project with you.



## **2. Communicate.**

Work with your remodeler to establish clear lines of communication as early as the consultation stage. Exchange phone numbers, email addresses and other preferred means of communication, making sure to identify a primary channel. It's also good to set expectations for response times, since you're likely not their sole client.

## **3. Set limits.**

The remodeling crew will need access to your home during the project. If you would prefer to keep certain areas off-limits, say so. It should also be understood that dirt, dust and noise are part of the renovation process and not entirely avoidable. If you need quiet on certain hours or days, communicate these needs in advance so that tasks can be scheduled accordingly.

## **4. Be available.**

You don't need to be on-site all day, every day; just be actively involved with the project. This keeps misunderstandings from getting entrenched and makes it easy for the contractor to reach you should there be unexpected surprises (and expenses!).

Another reason you'll want to be available in case of emergencies is timeliness. During a renovation many steps are dependent on others, so a delay in decision-making can bring the job to a halt.



## 5. Trust your remodeler.

Any good remodeler will have a vested interest in your happiness. At this point you'd have already made sure they're a reputable provider, so you should be able to listen to their concerns and suggestions without worry. Remember: they are the expert. Understanding design, labor and materials is part of their job.

Finally, as with any working relationship, treat everyone with respect. This should go without saying—especially since they know where you live! Kidding aside, remember that being respectful and maintaining a good rapport with your remodeler will ultimately benefit you and your home.



## Resources to Help Your Renovation Run Smoothly

Home renovation is complex, labor-intensive, and sometimes unpredictable. But that doesn't mean you should let yourself be intimidated by the prospect of an upcoming project! The following resources can take some of the difficulty out of planning.

### Resources for Gathering Ideas

- **Pinterest.** [Pinterest](#) is a social media platform that lets you organize images and videos related to your project into shareable idea boards. It's the ultimate brainstorming tool!
- **Houzz.** [Houzz](#) is a treasure trove of design inspiration, complete with professional-quality photos. Like Pinterest, Houzz lets you create Ideabooks that you can use as a visual guide during consultation.





## Resources for Planning and Organization

- **Home Improvement Planner (HIP).** [HIP](#) is a mobile app that makes it easy for you to visualize your design, estimate renovation costs, and build a budget. You can also use it during the renovation to communicate with your remodeler, track progress, and set reminders.
- **ImproveNet.** [ImproveNet](#) is a website that provides resources for all stages of home improvement, including location-specific project estimates.





## Resources for Siding Projects

- **Siding Estimator.** If you're doing an exterior remodel, [Siding Estimator](#) is a good way to estimate costs specific to siding. It provides low, average and high estimates for your job.
- **LP® SmartSide® Product Literature.** If you're thinking of using LP SmartSide Trim & Siding products in your remodel, you'll find brochures, case studies, warranties and more [here](#).





## Discover LP® SmartSide® Products

LP SmartSide is a complete line of trim and siding products manufactured by LP Building Solutions, a global leader in high-performance building solutions. It combines the beauty of real wood with the strength and workability of an engineered wood product. LP SmartSide Trim & Siding is treated to the core with LP's exclusive SmartGuard® process to help resist termites and fungal decay, making it one of the most durable siding solutions available on the market today.

If you're interested in using LP SmartSide products in your next project, visit [UpsideToSmartSide.com](https://UpsideToSmartSide.com) or call **(888) 820-0325** (toll-free) to find a remodeler near you.



Data included in this guide was pulled from multiple sources including: Apartment Therapy, Bob Vila, Canadian Home Builder's Association, Finance Super Hero, Fresh Home, Homebuilding, Scott's Reno to Reveal, The Spruce and This Old House.

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