

# How to Plan A Successful Renovation



MORSE CONSTRUCTIONS

# Introduction



Two weeks before the holidays, we received an email from a husband who wanted to surprise his wife with a complete bathroom renovation for Christmas. The thought was lovely, but the expectation was unrealistic.

Reality television has made it seem that a bathroom renovation can be completed overnight, kitchens can be updated in a weekend, and a whole new house can be built in seven days. These shows may be entertaining, but there is very little real about them. Real life renovations are full of careful decisions, hard choices, consultations, budgeting, building permits, scheduling, and ordering. This behind-the-scenes work doesn't make for good television, but is essential for a successful project.

Just as preparation is key to a great vacation, advance planning is crucial to a smooth renovation project that stays on schedule and within budget.

In the following pages, we outline the essential planning steps behind every successful renovation.

# Step 1: Laying the Foundation

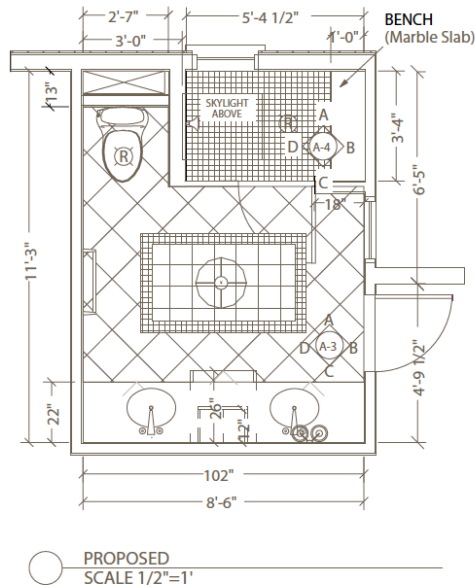
A successful renovation project begins with introspection. The more specific you are about your goals and available funds, the faster a project can move forward. Think about your:

**Reasons for renovating** – Sample questions to ask yourself:

- Do you simply want to update tired-looking spaces or are you looking for ways to make your home function more effectively for your lifestyle?
- Do you want to make changes for long-term enjoyment of your home, or is increasing the resale value a consideration?
- How long will you be living in your home?
- When do you need the project to be completed?

The clearer you are about your personal goals for the project, the easier it is for your design/build team to develop ideal solutions.

**Design and style preferences** – A design team refines your vision, but it helps if you know your likes and dislikes. Begin with your current space: What do you like about it and what doesn't work for you? Start a le of photos of rooms or features that provide inspiration. Ideabooks on [houzz.com](http://houzz.com) are a great way to share your ideas and preferences with your design/build team.



# Step 1: Laying the Foundation



- **Future renovation plans** – If your goal is to remodel the entire house and your budget permits, a whole house renovation in one fell swoop is more cost-effective than a phased approach. However, if a phased approach is the appropriate way to proceed, you will save time and money if you take the time upfront to think through all desired changes and create a master plan. Future plans may affect current placement of plumbing lines, electrical wires, heating units or special design features. Your design/build team may be able to save you money by planning the current project in a way to reduce the cost of renovations down the road.

- **Budget** – Know how much you are willing to spend on your renovation – and be prepared to share that number with your design/build team. Set a budget that is comfortable for you, even if it means that you need to forego some enticing, but expensive, design or material choices or reduce the desired scope of work. Plan to set aside 10% to 20% of the total project cost (depending on scope of work and site conditions) for the unexpected, such as hidden plumbing, electrical or structural issues.

## Step 2: Design

Unless your renovation is limited to updating existing finishes, you may need a professional designer to develop plans. Your designer should be familiar with local building codes and relevant community historic commission and zoning requirements so you don't spend time on plans that won't be approved.

You have two options: hire an architect, space planner or interior designer to develop design plans, or hire a design/build firm. Morse Constructions works with outside designers or provides design/build services, depending upon our client's preferences.

Design/build is a great way to streamline the process, particularly if your budget is important. Since the design and construction team is integrated, team members work cooperatively to ensure that proposed designs are buildable within your budget. If you prefer to work with an outside designer/architect, be sure to factor in extra time for design adjustments if construction costs come in higher than the designer anticipated.



## Step 3: Selections & Budgeting



Even a single-room renovation requires many decisions about everything from flooring to ceiling fixtures. Your choices clearly have a direct effect on the bottom line. If your selections are more expensive than your budget, you may need to adjust the budget, change the scope of work, or select different materials.

It may be tempting to dive right in to a renovation project without nailing down all the details, but it is impossible to develop a realistic final budget without researching and selecting materials first. This time will vary depending on your decision-making style.

Once the design and selections are finalized, your renovation firm will develop a detailed budget and contract outlining the terms of the project.

## Step 4: Scheduling



With proper planning, selections are made and long lead items ordered before construction begins.

A well-organized pre-construction phase includes time for:

- Building permits and historic commission approvals: Building permits are handled on a town-by-town basis. Generally any improvements aside from basic repairs require a building permit. If you live in a historic home in an area with a historic commission, anticipate stricter standards for exterior renovations or additions and more time required for approvals. Your renovation firm may need to factor in anything from two weeks for a basic building permit, to many months to obtain the required approvals.
- Materials ordering and delivery: Ideally, all selections are procured before the project start or, at a minimum, lead times are identified and addressed in the estimated construction schedule. This way, you can be confident that a needed item doesn't bring the project to a halt. Items that take multiple weeks for delivery should be ordered well in advance of the construction start date.



# How Long Before I Can Start?



There is no precise timetable for the planning process. Larger or more complex projects take longer to plan, but the upfront time will pay dividends in a smoother, more efficient project with fewer costly change orders. As a general rule of thumb, expect the planning process to take at least six weeks and as long as six months for whole house or historic renovations. We encourage clients to contact us well in advance of their desired project start.

Your renovation firm should provide a written project development schedule so you may track progress and anticipate when decisions need to be made. The more responsive you are with your decisions, the more smoothly the development phase moves along.

Our mission at Morse Constructions is “to create spaces that enhance our clients’ lifestyles through a collaborative, fun, clearly defined process, delivered with great care and respect for our clients, our team and the environment.” A well thought out and executed project development phase is the first step on this path.



Morse Construction has been associated with a number of organizations and have won a number of awards over the years.

We are proudly members of the following organizations:

- National Association of the Remodeling Industry (NARI) Eastern MA, facilitator of NARI Green Remodeling Certification
- Builders Association of Greater Boston Green Council.

Find out more about our work and our team:

[www.morseconstructions.com](http://www.morseconstructions.com)

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## About Morse Constructions

Morse Constructions Inc. is a design/build firm providing complete renovation services to homeowners throughout the greater Boston area for over 40 years.

Morse Constructions has been selected as “Best of Houzz and received the PRISM Gold Award for Best Universal Design from the Builders and Remodelers Association of Greater Boston.

Our work has been featured on Houzz and in numerous publications including This Old House, Architectural Digest, Better Homes and Gardens, and The Boston Globe.

Over our years in business, Remodeling Magazine named Morse to its list of the top 50 remodeling companies in the country.



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