

MISSION VIEJO MAINTENANCE/RENOVATION/REMODELING BRIEF ISSUE 2

The Right Contractor (from MISSION VIEJO REPORTER VOL. 3 NO. 8)

Home Maintenance Tips – Choosing the Right Contractor for Major Renovations.

Thinking of remodeling your Mission Viejo home? If you are there are many things you may wish to consider. Take time to screen your architect/designer (if applicable to your project) and contractor, planning your project from start to finish, and taking simple precautionary steps, it is possible that the entire process can be painless and satisfying (and even fun!) for everyone involved.

The first step is to determine if any assistance is needed with design. Ask yourself why the decision is being made to do the work and what need is driving the decision. Generally, when adding square footage, the services of an architect or a good designer are a must. Most building departments require drawings that show the footprint of the existing structure, and details indicating how the addition relates to the existing building. Even though some general contractors offer this service, if you're adding a significant amount of space, it is a good idea to hire an architect experienced with modern and contemporary design in order to preserve the lines of your home. Sometimes an engineer may be required to calculate loads for large projects.

Always check portfolios and references. Bear in mind that usually someone other than the design expert built the final product that is represented in the portfolio. Therefore it is a good idea to contact the contractor and homeowner involved if you have further questions.

When budgeting for a project, it is important to have two budgets in mind: the target budget (the optimistic number) and a contingency budget. If significant changes in design occur during construction, the impact can significantly delay the project as well as increase job costs well beyond the target budget (and possibly the contingency budget). With that in mind, try to make the big decisions before signing an agreement. If construction under contract begins, and changes occur, get those changes documented as an addendum to the original agreement.

The process of selecting a contractor is best done by personal referral and inquiring with the State License Board (for complaints and license status: <https://www.doradls.state.co.us/alison.php>), City of Aurora Business License Lookup at: <http://apps.auroragov.org/apps/businessverification/businessverification.cfm> , and the Better Business Bureau (<http://denver.bbb.org/>) (for reported complaints and how they were resolved); job pricing; and by judging your level of comfort with the contractor. Having a contractor referred by friends, neighbors, and relatives is a very good method of screening.

As far as pricing goes, as a general rule, the lowest price is not often the best deal, and the highest price is not necessarily equivalent to the best quality of workmanship. Of course, there are always exceptions to generalizations. When checking references, ask about quality of work, fairness of pricing, if there were any unexpected delays (and why), and how conscientious the contractor and his or her employees were as far as making the project as comfortable as was practical.

Lastly, one should feel comfortable having the contractor and employees around their house. After all, the crew will be around there quite a bit – so its best to chose a contractor that your feel comfortable around. Both the contractor and homeowner ultimately share the same goal: to have the project go quickly and smoothly. Careful planning, diligent research, deliberate decisions, and keeping a good professional demeanor throughout the construction process will ensure the best likelihood of a successful and satisfying experience for everyone involved.