



RENOVATION 101:

Building Solid Foundations

A solid foundation is more than bricks and mortar – it involves a solid relationship with your builder.

BY BRUCE CROMIE

So you have watched the TV shows, read the magazines and seen the results of a fantastic renovation at your friend's house. You know what you want: more space, a great room like all the new houses have, an open-concept kitchen, a second storey, an ensuite bathroom and maybe an extra bedroom. But you are not quite sure where to start.

Plus, there are some important questions to answer. How much could it cost? How long could it take? When can we get started?

If buying your home is the biggest investment you will likely make in your life, then renovating your castle is definitely next. I would actually put it ahead of buying your home. There are often more considerations to think about and the procedures can be a lot more confusing.

You need a strong foundation, and I don't mean the kind built out of bricks and mortar. You need to start the process off on the right foot, and with the right people.

The first place to start is to contact a reputable contractor. This individual will be the foundation for everything you are about to go through.

You can find reliable, reputable contractors through referrals from friends and relatives, the local building supply contractor desk, at exhibits at home shows, or from the Greater Toronto Home Builders Association (GTHBA).

The GTHBA offers a Renovators of Excellence Program, also called Renomark. The association and its excellence program are the closest thing that the residential construction industry has to a gov-

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erning body (besides your local building department).

Its guidelines set out proper conduct, etiquette, warranties, contracts, insurance responsibilities and continuing education to ensure that members are up-to-date on the building codes, practices and responsibilities of today's professional builder/renovator.

These guidelines are the foundation for a smooth and rewarding renovation process.

Why not start with an architect?

The reason to start by contacting a reputable builder or renovator, rather than an architect or designer, is simple. A builder-contractor can give you the best overview of what will work in your situation. This can include a timeframe for the design and building process and a budget estimate.

However, the final price can only be given to you after a set of working drawings has been created.

A builder/renovator will have worked with many designers, architects, draughters and tradespeople. He can determine whether you need the services of a full-fledged architect, an interior designer or an architectural technologist. The prices for the design stage alone can be dramatically different, sometimes amounting to thousand of dollars.

In the next issue, we'll discuss how getting it right with the local zoning department will save you time, money and headaches. ✨

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