HOMEOWNER REPAIR GUIDE

PLANNING FOR KITCHEN REMODELING

Remodeling a kitchen can be one of the most stressful projects you can undertake. Before you start, here are some things to consider.

COST

First things first – your budget! Whether you will be doing it yourself or hiring a contractor, you have to determine what you have available to spend on the project. Everything else will be secondary to your budget.

This handout will not address specific costs, because that subject could take several pages alone. However, there are some general perspectives on project costs that you may find helpful. Moving the locations of windows and doors is usually very expensive. Even moving water or electric lines can add more to your cost than you can afford, so you will have to decide if relocating that sink is worth it! Working within a very tight budget may mean that your kitchen remodeling job is limited to cosmetic changes. But, even such changes – such as replacing the countertop, installing new lighting, and adding a fresh coat of paint – can rejuvenate the room. You can complete the new look with new faucets and hardware, like cabinet handles.

While this “low-bucks” approach won’t gain you a built-in refrigerator or a restaurant-style stove, you can still be resourceful when faced with a problem. For example, you can have the dishwasher painted to match the other appliances instead of replacing it, and then put the cost savings into another part of the job. Recycle what you can; for example, you can choose to clean up and re-use cabinets, rather than buy new ones.

SWEAT EQUITY VS. PROFESSIONALS

A tight budget usually requires some sweat equity. Patching plaster and painting can be handled by just about anyone, and it’s not that hard to replace a faucet. However, when there are structural changes to be done, calling in a professional tradesperson is the thing to do. Moving or replacing plumbing lines and upgrading electrical work will usually require permits, and the work will have to be inspected by your city’s Building Department.

> ### BUILD IN A CONTINGENCY FUND
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> Expect to find extra things that will need repair as the job progresses, such as crumbling plaster walls or corroded iron piping, and allow for that work in your budget (call it your “contingency fund”). Getting a minimum of three bids is another smart idea. An estimator’s guide will give you a clue as to average prices for the work you need to have done.

SHOPPING SMART

TIP	DETAILS
Stick to standard items	Especially if money is tight, stay away from extreme or custom designs in cabinets, light fixtures and hardware. Standard items – though not as glamorous – are less costly, and it will be easier to find replacement parts when needed.
Compare prices	Comparison pricing is work, but your preliminary research can pay off in considerable savings. Let a store know you're working on a remodeling project and, armed with your complete shopping list, inquire if it can offer any discounts if you make all your purchases there. Many retailers have a meet-or-beat pricing policy that may save you some more money.
Check online sources	Look at different brands and collect model numbers at a home center or plumbing-supply house, then investigate Web outlets.

DESIGN

RESOURCE	HOW IT HELPS
Graph paper & design software	You'll find graph paper very helpful in your kitchen planning. By mapping out the floor plan of your kitchen, you can work through new ideas. You'll want to have accurate measurements of the walls and the locations of all doors and windows. There are some inexpensive computer design programs for homeowners, so you can print out various options.
Magazines	Every year several do-it-yourself magazines have a kitchen-remodeling issue; check at your local library for back copies to scour for ideas. Now is the time to develop that "wish list" of things you would like to have – roll-out pots and pans drawers, recycling bins, and the like – and see which of them might fit your budget.
Architect	An architect is indicated if you want to change the structural design of the house, such as moving walls or building an addition. In some communities, exterior changes may have to be approved by an Architectural Review Board and/or the Ohio Historical Society. If you intend to stay within the existing kitchen floor plan, you will not need to do these steps.
Home centers & kitchen shops	Many "home center" retail stores and kitchen-and-bath specialty shops will do kitchen cabinet design plans for you. Most of the stores charge for the design plan, but will drop the charge if you purchase the cabinets from them.

PREPARATION

1 PLAN FOR A REALISTIC TIMETABLE

When it comes time to start the work, be prepared to be inconvenienced for a long period. Even with a "bare bones" project, the work is likely to take longer than you anticipate. Don't believe a contractor who promises that a whole new kitchen can be done in two weeks; you'll want to insist on a realistic timetable that will allow for a few unexpected delays.

2 SET UP A TEMPORARY KITCHEN

Plan to set up a “temporary kitchen” while yours is getting its makeover. Perhaps you can move appliances into a nearby room. (Be sure you have enough electric capacity to handle the load, and that you use the right size extension cords; check your plans with an electrician or your city’s Building Department.) A backyard grill can be a serviceable alternative to your stove, as can a microwave oven. Unless you’re planning to use only paper plates and cups, you’ll probably need to set up an area to wash dishes in your bathtub or laundry sink.

3 PACK UP THE KITCHEN

Before the job starts, you’ll need to pack up the contents of your kitchen, so they’re out of the way while the work is done. Keep out any items you use frequently, and store the rest elsewhere in the house. Heavy boxes from liquor stores are usually sturdy enough to handle pots and pans, silverware, and small appliances. Before you pack up your pantry staples, use this opportunity to check them and get rid of anything that is no longer in good condition.

4 CONTAIN THE DUST

> ### PLASTIC BARRIERS AT EVERY DOORWAY
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> Install a barrier of plastic sheeting at each doorway to the kitchen. It will help contain dust and debris (especially important if you will be disturbing old lead-based paint).

5 INSPECT NEW CABINETS ON DELIVERY

If you are getting new cabinets, be sure to open the cartons and inspect the cabinets as soon as they are delivered. That way, you can deal with any broken or damaged pieces before it’s time for them to be installed.

Even a low-cost kitchen remodeling project is going to disrupt your life, but approaching that disruption with humor – and an occasional restaurant meal – will help make it more bearable.

Home Repair Resource center

Home Repair Resource Center empowers homeowners to maintain their homes for sustainable and diverse communities.

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